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THE SONG OF SONGS UNVEILED:

A NEW

Translation and Exposition

OF THE

SONG OF SOLOMON.

BY THE

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P R E F A C E .

DEAR READER, the portion of the Holy Scriptures of which the following pages form a new Translation and Exposition, is one to which, as a whole, no key has been found by any of the ancient or modern writers on it, though they have been very numerous, and some of them very able. It has been the lot of this Song to be misunderstood, misinterpreted, and misapplied, both by Jew and Christian. The Rabbinical writers, while they acknowledged the sacredness of the Song, enveloped it at the same time in such a thick and impenetrable cloud of Cabalistic mysteries and absurd dreams of human invention, that its real contents are effectually hidden from the most careful and patient inquirer. Early Christian writers having, for the most part, yielded to their well-known propensity to mystify and spiritualize everything, have done over again the work of the Cabalistic Rabbis, and buried the real Song out of sight by their fanciful superstructures. Among modern Christian writers, some follow in the footsteps of the ancients, while others follow new inventions of their own. Some mystify and spiritualise it out and out, others make a wholesale present of it to Pharaoh's daughter, and others still think of equitably dividing it between the combatants, and while endeavouring to find in it both Christ and Solomon, the Church of Christ and Pharaoh's daughter, lose all, and find nothing. In the following work the author undertakes to prove that Solomon's Song celebrates the most prominent and important events of the ancient Church and her relation to the Covenant Angel, from Horeb to Calvary; but as the scheme is fully explained in the Introduction it is unnecessary to enter on it here.

The chief object of the author in the following pages is to rectify the mistranslated words and phrases, which in some instances have obscured entire passages, and to explain the metaphors and figures employed by the royal penman; but more especially to illustrate every passage by comparing it with the portion of Sacred History whose events it celebrates. Though the practical application has by no means been lost sight of or neglected, and an occasional exhortation or warning has been given where it has forced itself upon the mind of the author, still the field for practical application has increased so wonderfully by the new aspect which the Song assumes in this Book, that to have made it practical throughout would at least have doubled the volume, and perhaps have greatly interfered with the power and beauty of the historical connexion which he has shown to exist between this Song and the sacred history of the ancient Church of God. Besides, the author trusts that some of the masters in Israel, considering the Song in the entirely new aspect in which it appears in the following pages, and appreciating the new and rich field for practical application which is here unfolded, will undertake such a work, and do it far more justice than the author, who is a foreigner to the English language, could be expected to do.

The reader is humbly requested to exercise patience in going through the following pages, and not to judge hastily of the idea of the Song being partly historical and partly prophetic to the sacred author, and now entirely historical to us, until he has read a great portion of it at least, for it is chiefly in the second and third parts that this is clearly seen, and in the author's humble opinion placed beyond all doubt. The same request may be made with regard to the adopted idea that the "daughters of Jerusalem" throughout the Song is a metaphorical name to signify the other (Gentile) nations, while the "Bride" of the Song is the ancient Church, the "daughter of Zion" of the prophets. This and

other similar ideas may appear strange to the reader in entering on the following pages, but as he advances and sees what astonishing treasures the Song contains, when rightly understood and justly applied, he will also see that the Bride of the Song is none other but the ancient Church, and the "daughters of Jerusalem" none other but the Gentile nations, who, towards its conclusion, join the converted "Little Sister" (the first Christian Church at Jerusalem), and together compose the New Covenant Bride, or the New Testament Church. The reader, as he proceeds, will find things wonderfully new and fresh, and, in the prophetic portion of the Song, some things overwhelmingly astonishing with respect to its literal and striking fulfilment in the history of the Church from the days of Solomon to the formation of the Christian Church by the instrumentality of the first Christian Church at Jerusalem. With these remarks the author recommends himself and the work to the Covenant love of the God of Abraham, from whom also he implores a rich blessing and a spark of divine light for the soul of the attentive reader. With Him is the fountain of life, in His light we shall see light.

B. W.

DUNDEE, Sept. 13, 1858.

INTRODUCTION.

THE CHARACTER OF THE SONG.

THIS magnificent portion of the Holy Scriptures is an allegorical composition, which comprehends the whole mystery of the pure and everlasting love of our heavenly Father to His Church, which He redeemed and bought to Himself, at no less a price than the incarnation, sufferings, and death of His only begotten Son, with whose precious blood He washed and purified her, and by His Spirit sanctified and prepared her "as a bride adorned for her husband." The chronological period of this holy Song comprises the long interval which elapsed between the glorious scenes of Mount Horeb, and the more mysterious and more solemn scenes of Mount Calvary. The task which the wise king, moved by the Holy Spirit, undertook in this sublime composition, was, to illustrate the mysterious relations of the Church to her Covenant-Angel from the beginning of that relation—to celebrate the historical events and recorded manifestations of Divine love and compassion towards that chosen and redeemed Church—and to exhibit the whole of her (then) past, present, and future (*i.e.*, down to the Messianic period) connection with her Lord and Saviour, in striking pictures, exalted and beautiful figures, highly poetical scenes, and allegorical language. Thus, while its external form represents the mutual endearments and reciprocal protestations of the most tender attachment between two lovers, its substance comprehends the reciprocal covenant promises, the conditions, the agreements, the manifestations, the interruptions, the reconciliations, and the renewed protestations of mutual love and attachment between the Angel of Jehovah's presence and His beloved Church, from the beginning of their relation as Redeemer and redeemed, unto the time when He sealed His covenant promises and eternal love with His precious blood; or, as was said above, from Mount Horeb to Calvary.

INTERNAL PROOFS THAT THE BRIDEGROOM AND BRIDE OF THE SONG ARE NONE OTHER BUT CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH ON EARTH.

It is evident that, in this Song, Solomon had to treat of Divine perfection, true and pure love, unwavering attachment, unabating tenderness, and inflexible resolution on the one hand, and human imperfection, wavering and changing love, unstable determination, mutable resolution, and frequent forgetfulness on the other. Hence he was obliged to admit spots and shades into the picture of the Bride, while that of the Bridegroom is all light, all love, all majesty, all perfection, spotless in beauty, unchangeable and "altogether lovely" in character, Divine in forbearance and forgiveness, abundant in mercy and full of grace. If the intended Bridegroom of this Song had not been the King of Glory, and the Bride His Church on earth, this anomaly would be inexplicable,—yea, quite unnatural.

In depicting the character and moral qualities of the Bride under figures of corporeal beauty, and in sketching the events of her biography under the cover of metaphorical language, she is represented as having been persecuted, nay enslaved, at an early period of her life, by her own brethren, "the children of her mother," who compelled her to be a "keeper of their vineyards," while she was thus obliged to neglect her own. And who but Israel in Egypt—who but the covenanted seed of Abraham in servitude—who but these brick-makers, and castle-builders, and idol-worshippers, to whom their tyrants refused a moment's respite or breathing-time, and whom they forced to abandon and neglect their covenant God—who, we ask, but that nation can correspond to such a picture? Exposed to the scorching rays of the sun by day, and to the desert blast by night, she became black "like the tents of Kedar;" and the whole tenor of this Song shows the personage whom this image represents to be a degraded moral character, produced by neglect and persecution. But it is even in that enslaved and degraded state that she finds a lover who pays her the most tender attention, calls her the "fairest among women," and gives her suddenly and altogether unexpectedly, so much encouragement, that she as quickly addresses him, "O thou whom my soul loveth!" and

desires him to bestow on her still surer tokens of His love and attachment, by "kissing her with the kisses of His mouth," by drawing her after him, and introducing her into His royal palace. The lover, then, of the blackened, enslaved, and degraded girl, is none other than a mighty, magnificent, far-famed, and beloved prince; "thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee."—Is not this the King of kings, the God of Abraham, who in His Covenant love and Divine mercy came, according to His promise, to deliver the sun-burnt and sorely oppressed slave in Egypt, telling her that He was the God of her fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and that, notwithstanding all her imperfections, He would deliver her, make her an "holy nation and a royal priesthood," bring her into the land of promise, and make her rejoice in His sanctuary? And let us mark some of the very early expressions and entreaties put into the mouth of the newly encouraged Bride: "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth."—"Draw me, we will run after thee."—"O that the king would bring me, (or 'when the king shall have brought me') into his chambers, we shall be glad and rejoice in thee."—Are not these expressions equivalent to the interceding language of Moses, (the representative of that redeemed nation), when he said, "I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, show me now thy way, that I may know thee . . . and consider that this nation is thy people;" again, "If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence;" again, "I beseech thee show me now thy glory;"* again, it is recorded of Israel, "And they said, all that the Lord hath said, we will do, and be obedient?"† Let these expressions be calmly compared and seriously considered, and it must appear, we think, to an unprejudiced mind, that Solomon copied these events and clothed them in figurative language. But, before proceeding any farther, we would ask: Is it reasonable to think, or is it probable to suppose, if Solomon had had any other object or plan in view, than that of which we suppose him to treat, that he would have at the very outset painted the heroine of his Song as a sun-burnt, enslaved, and degraded woman, the woman, too, whom he wished to make the only chosen and beloved bride of a

* Exod. xxxiii. 13, 15, 18.

† xxiv. 7.

great and magnificent king, who describes her to be "fair as the moon, bright as the sun?" Reason says no! Common sense repudiates the very idea of such a perversion. The established fame of the author of this Song, as a sublime and accurate poet, precludes the idea that he should have committed a blunder of this kind in the very basis of such a beautiful composition, and paint black as "Kedar's tents" a perfection of beauty, which he compares afterwards to the "brightness of the sun!"

But as we cannot enter here into particulars, which are treated at large in the sequel, where each successive passage is illustrated and proved to refer to some corresponding event in the history of the Church, and in a regular progressive form, we shall only refer at present to a few more of its striking features, which bear testimony to our leading argument.

Great and severe as were the sufferings and persecutions to which the Bride of the Song had been exposed in the days of her youth, all these must have passed away, and been exchanged for unmingled happiness and constant joy, when the once enslaved girl became the declared and formally adopted bride of the great and mighty king, who, according to the last two verses of the first chapter, introduced her into his royal palace, and must then in fact have married her, and declared her queen, as she says, "Our bed also is green. The beams of our house are cedar," &c. Is it not therefore very strange, that in chap. ii. the bridegroom says regarding his bride, "as a lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters?"* Again, "O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, (or 'of the precipice,') let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice," &c. † Then she is still surrounded by enemies, still oppressed by adversaries, still persecuted, still exposed to difficulties and trials, still driven to secret hiding places among wild mountain cliffs, where she weeps and mourns, complains and supplicates, imploring the speedy aid of her mighty lover, and his effectual intervention for her deliverance! Is not this the history of the ancient Church, with whom the Lord entered into alliance at Mount Sinai, whom He brought into His royal palace, into His sanctuary,

* Verse 2.

† Verse 14.

into the tabernacle built in the wilderness soon after the ratification of the covenant? Is not the Bride of the Song that covenanted Church, who, though then already the affianced Bride of the great King of kings, was still surrounded by many bitter and mighty enemies? Does not the last quoted passage refer to the great struggles of that Bride when she was fighting against the Canaanites—to the dangers and hardships to which she was then exposed—to the persecutions and calamities which befell her at different periods during the rule of the Judges? Had she not actually and literally to hide herself among the “clefts of the rocks and wild mountain precipices,” and was she not delivered from these calamities as soon as she made her Beloved hear her supplicating voice, and see her faith-stamped and repentance-impressed countenance? And why should fancy and wild invention envelope with the sackcloth of dark mysticism such a sublime Song, which so clearly and regularly follows the historical events of the Church of God as recorded in Sacred Writ? Which of these hundreds of different interpretations, fanciful inventions, and elaborated technical commentaries, has so much as touched upon the internal difficulties, anomalies, incoherent and incompatible portions, events, and relations of the Song? Which of these interpreters has done more than pick out some isolated expressions, and detached dialogues, and either secularise them or mystify them into equally isolated toys of fancy or incoherent monographic pictures, which have no existence in the Song, but only in their own imaginations? And why so? Because no connections, nor relations, nor transactions between any two individuals, can correspond to the metaphors and figures which were chosen to suit the historical events and recorded relation between the Lord and His Church, and not the latter to suit the former. For instance, take away Israel’s history, their call, covenant, and fall, from the graphic, sublime, and affecting metaphor employed by Ezekiel in chap. xvi. 1—34, and then call together the whole host of fanciful, mystifying, and spiritualising interpreters, and you will see what a deplorable monster-image they will make of it. And why? Because it was Israel’s history, misery, call, covenant, greatness, glory, pride, fall, and rebellion, which led to the adoption of that metaphor. Together they form a sublime whole; but without the sub-

stance the metaphor is nothing but an incoherent and impossible extravagance. Other instances to the same purpose might be referred to; but this argument, too, will be seen in a clearer light in the following Commentary, from the regular connection of historical facts which, in the Song, follow each other in chronological order.

After a most tender and lovely intercourse for a certain time—after repeated mutual protestations of the most fervent love and sincere attachment, as recorded in the first two chapters, the third opens abruptly with bitter complaints on the part of the again suffering Bride, who, during many long and dreary nights, mourns the absence of her beloved, whom she ardently seeks, but in vain. At last she finds him. But then, instead of leading her back, as would naturally have been expected, into his royal palace, in which we saw her already installed towards the end of the first chapter, she leads him into her “mother’s house!” Can this anomaly be otherwise explained than by applying the passage to the long absence of the Lord’s presence from His Bride the ancient Church, during the dreary night of the period of the Judges, and to her having found Him again in the days of David, when she brought Him into her “mother’s house,” into the temporary tabernacle prepared by David on Mount Zion?* Towards the end of the same chapter, a magnificent royal marriage is celebrated, with a description of riches and splendour worthy of the occasion, and certainly nothing in the world of fancy, nothing but the reality of the dedication of Solomon’s magnificent temple, the appearance of the glory of the Lord in it, and the renewal of the covenant between Bridegroom and Bride, can be the substance of these sublime images. As for the Bride in the figure, mark, she remains Bride and not Queen, espoused but not married to the very end of the Song! Hence we see that the figure has no signification without the substance which it envelopes, and that substance can be nothing else but the relation and covenant connection between the Lord and His Church. That covenant alone was several times interrupted and several times solemnly renewed; and the Church of God alone can be the Bride of this Song; for it is

* Zion is frequently styled in Scripture language the mother of the Church—but this subject too must be referred to the Commentary, where the reader will have ample scope to examine and judge.

she who, though affianced to the Lord by an everlasting covenant, is always called the Bride, and so remains on earth until, sanctified and glorified in heaven, she becomes "perfect in one," in union and communion with her glorious Head, with whom and in whom she rejoices throughout eternity. It is only in that blessed state of beatitude that she is called "the Bride, the Lamb's wife."

One instance more will suffice for the present. Take the passage in chapter v. in which the Bride is represented as having waxed cold and indifferent to all the benefits which she had received from her Bridegroom, and refusing to open to him when he knocked at her door in a cold and rainy night, and the Bridegroom, after repeated but fruitless entreaties for admission, as having withdrawn and left her to her dismal thoughts, and the Bride, thus awakened to a sense of her folly and ingratitude, as having then run through the streets in search of her offended lord, and was met by the watchmen who smote and wounded her, and by the keepers of the walls who tore down the veil from her head. In vain will one seek in the fields of fancy for a key to this mysterious drama. Nothing else but Israel's fall and backsliding, the Lord's repeated knockings and calls by His servants the prophets for her repentance and conversion, her hardness of heart and continual delays, the Lord's final withdrawal when He said, "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence and seek my face," &c.,* her consequent sufferings, reiterated strokes, captivity into Babylon, and repentance,—we say that nothing but that event will correspond to the allegory of that passage in its general features as well as in its particular details, in its immediate contents as well as in its relation to the whole Song. In fact the Song of Solomon is truly historical throughout. The first four chapters contain a summary account of the then past history of the Church; and the last four chapters are prophetic, foretelling the chief events of the then future history of the Church, down to the Messianic period.

* Hos. v. 15.

THE SONG OF SOLOMON DOES NOT AND CANNOT CONTAIN THE LEAST REFERENCE, NOR A SHADE OF ALLUSION TO SOLOMON'S MARRIAGE WITH THE DAUGHTER OF PHARAOH, OR WITH ANY OTHER OF HIS QUEENS.

We shall now notice a wound which this blessed Book has received in the house and from the hands of some of its avowed friends. It is almost incredible to see the ridiculous inconsistency of those who plead for the allegorical character of the Song, and for its spiritual importance, as treating of and celebrating the love of Christ to his Church, while at the same time they pour profanity and insult upon the *body* in which such a precious *soul* is supposed to dwell! They profane and insult the sublime figures and metaphors in which the highest mysteries of heaven are clothed, by endeavouring to make Solomon's fall and disgrace—his marriage with Pharaoh's daughter, who seduced him into the participation of idolatry—its principal theme! To say the least of this deplorable idea, had a single thought of that lamentable event of his life entered his mind when he composed it, it would surely have shared the fate of hundreds of others of those songs which he must have composed during his estrangement from God, and which he must have delivered to the flames at the time he discovered the "Vanity of vanities" of this world; and when he said "Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man; for God shall bring every work into judgment, even all those that are secret, whether they be good or evil."* We can easily conceive that Solomon, inspired by the Holy Spirit, should employ the figure of sanctified wedded love in general, to express the love of Christ to his Church, as the Apostle Paul speaking by the same Spirit says—"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it."† But the idea that he should employ a sinful passion, a criminal love for an idolatrous woman, whom a backsliding child of God took in marriage against the Lord's commandment, an act which proved so disastrous to him, and which he so bitterly

* Ecc. xii. 13, 14.

† Eph. v. 25.

deplored after his conversion,* as a metaphor to express the divine and mysterious love of God to His Church, is not only shocking but absurd; as much so certainly as if one were to maintain that in the 45th Psalm, David refers to his criminal love to Bathshebah which he so deeply and bitterly deplores in Ps. li. &c. ! Would the one be more shocking and absurd than the other?

But we would ask, what are the motives, and where are the reasons for such a lamentable fancy? Is it because Solomon refers in it once to a horse in Pharaoh's chariot? If so, might not one conclude with equal reason, that Isaiah too, when he says to the Church in the name of God—"As a bridegroom rejoiceth over his bride, so shall Jehovah rejoice over thee," must refer to Solomon's marriage with Pharaoh's daughter; seeing that prophet speaks very frequently of Egypt, Pharaoh, Nile, horses, and crocodiles! So likewise, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Zephaniah, Zechariah, John the Baptist, our Saviour Himself, Paul, Peter, and John in his Revelation, all speak of God and His Church under the figure of Bridegroom and Bride, and almost all make more or less mention of Pharaoh, Egypt, &c. Or is it because towards the end of the third chapter, mention is made of a marriage of Solomon? But this would show thoroughly the ignorance and presumption of these men, for the Bride of the Song (in figure and substance) remains Bride—espoused but not married—to the very end of the Song, which surely could not have been the case, if Solomon's marriage with Pharaoh's daughter (or with any other princess) had been referred to in chapter iii., and if any of Solomon's queens had been intended as the heroine of that Song, even as regards its figures.

Now we shall meet these conjectures on other grounds, and show how far astray fancy and pre-conceived false ideas have led them. We suppose that even they will readily admit the loftiness of style, the beauty of diction, the elegance and harmony, the purity and force of the language, and the tasteful and happy choice of figures which the princely poet employed in the composition of this wonderful Song; and if so, how can they for a moment entertain the idea that either Pharaoh's daughter or any other of

* See Ecc. iv. 13—16; vii. 26—28; see explanation of these passages in our Commentary on that Book.

his favourite princesses could have been primarily intended as the heroine of that Song? Does one ask, Why not?—we answer, because in that case this poem would be the most absurd, incoherent, and self-contradictory piece of extravagance that ever escaped from the pen of a deranged bard. And this can be proved at a glance.

In chap. i. 4, the Bridegroom is a mighty king; in verse 7, a poor shepherd; and in verse 12, a king again! Let us not confound the time of Abraham with that of Solomon; in the former one could be both king and shepherd, in the latter a king was a king, and a shepherd a shepherd.* In chap. ii. 8, the Bridegroom is a *wanderer* on mountains and hills; in iii. 7—11, none else but king Solomon! In chap. v. 9, he is a *perfect stranger* to the daughters of Jerusalem; in viii. 11, he is Solomon again! And what is this? Is it figure within figure, metaphor within metaphor, wheel within wheel? In chap. ii. 2, the Bride is among the daughters “as a lily among thorns,” in vi. 9, “the daughters saw her and blessed (or praised) her, the queens and concubines, and they praised (or, admired) her!” In chap. i. 6, the Bride’s mother had many children besides her; in vi. 9, she is the “only one to her mother!” In chap. i. 5—8, she is black “like the tents of Kedar;” in vi. 10, she is “fair as the moon, bright as the sun!” In chap. i. 6—8, she is a poor persecuted shepherdess and garden keeper; in vii. 1, she is “a daughter of princes!” In chap. i. 16, 17, she is a queen in the king’s palace, and speaks of “our bed,” “our house;” in iii. 4, she finds him after a long absence, holds him fast and forces him as it were to go with her into her “mother’s house!”—not as a wife and queen, but as a Bride again! And what had Pharaoh’s daughter to do again in her mother’s house? Has she returned to Egypt? Has Solomon been wandering there? In chap. iii. 11, Solomon is married, but surely not king Solomon, and not to Pharaoh’s daughter, if she (or any other) had been intended as the Bride of the Song; for the Bride remains bride (espoused, but not married) to the end of the Song. Moreover, in the beginning of the last chapter, she expresses the wish that she could bring him into her “mother’s house” again; and in the very last

* See 2 Sam. vii. 8, what a mighty distance there was in these days between a shepherd and a king.

verse he again absents himself, and she again calls him "lover" "or friend," but not *husband*; for they were only espoused! In chap. iv 8, the Bridegroom (supposed to be married in chap. iii.) invites again his *Bride* (not his wife) to come with him "from Lebanon, from the mount Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lion's den, from the mountains of leopards." On this passage Scott very justly remarks: "In what sense could Pharaoh's daughter be called to come to Solomon, after their espousals, from the horrid tops of these mountains? And what had she, even before her marriage, to do, either on the savage wilds of Lebanon, the northern boundary of Canaan, or on the top of Hermon to the east of Jordan?" Egypt lies south-west of Canaan. Now we would ask those who have adopted this strange and fantastic idea, not only how they would reply to the facts now stated, but suppose Solomon had presented his Egyptian queen with a copy of this Song, what do they imagine could she have made of it? Is there the most distant probability that she could have found in it anything which should have occurred to her as having the least reference to her own person, marriage, or domestic life as queen? What could she have made of those changes and vicissitudes, those elevations and depressions, black and white, poor and rich, a persecuted shepherdess and a mighty queen, soon married and in the king's palace, and soon a desolate Bride in her mother's house, now admired and envied by queens and princesses, now persecuted, hated and wandering among the horrid wilds of mount Lebanon, Amana, and Hermon, and dwelling with lions and panthers! But the subject is too ridiculous for being dwelt upon.

Only one other question (and if possible even more puzzling than the former) we would put to these fanciful painters. What can they, on their theory, make the event recorded in chap. v. 2—8 to signify? According to their idea, we must suppose that king Solomon came once in a dreary and rainy night, and knocked at the cottage door of Pharaoh's daughter, his queen and wife, pleading and begging for admittance. Being too indolent to rise, and having no servant to open the door, she refuses to do so herself, pleading the great inconvenience to which it would put her—king Solomon therefore becomes angry at this want of respect, and withdraws in displeasure—the queen, however, soon comes to

herself, and distressed at what had happened, rises quickly, and runs about in the streets and broad places of Jerusalem in search of the king—the watchmen finding her alone in that state, will not believe that she is their queen, and notwithstanding all her protestations, smite and wound her, and tear away the veil from her head. But the poor wounded queen runs about till daybreak, conjuring whomsoever of the daughters of Jerusalem she meets, should they happen to discover the lost king, that they should tell him that his queen was “sick of love!” And why did not she ask the minister of state, the captains of the guards, or other officials, what had become of the king? Stranger still, the daughters of Jerusalem ask their queen who was her lover, and what were his qualities? as if they knew not their great and magnificent king Solomon! No! after all the allowances we may make for a poet’s liberty, such enormous improbabilities, and impossible exaggerations, bordering on the ridiculous, have no example in the figures, metaphors, and parables of holy writ. We have only to cast an eye over Solomon’s Proverbs to see the exactness of the figures he employs, and to repudiate the idea of such wild extravagances ever having entered his exalted mind.

One great and distinguished feature in the oracles of God is, that very often while prophets were trying to clothe the mysteries of Jehovah’s sanctuary in figurative language, the Spirit of God overpowered the imagination, and the spiritual substance came forth before the figure, and hence figure and substance often change places, even in one and the same prophecy. This is the case in Solomon’s Song. He is so absorbed with the reality, with the great mysteries of Divine love displayed towards the Church from the very beginning, and especially in and by the promised Messiah his anti-type, the great Prince of Peace, and the builder of the spiritual temple, that the figures in which he wished to envelop these truths became so varying and so transparent, that one must see instantly and permanently the spiritual realities for which this Song was intended. No persons ever lived who could be assimilated to the Bride and Bridegroom of this Song, and serve as metaphors in all the particular events recorded in it. Jesus the blessed Saviour and His Church are its Bridegroom and Bride, and the slightest incident mentioned in it has a minute and important

signification and place in the history of the Church and her experience; while the figures employed, having been chosen to suit historical realities, relations, and conditions of diverse periods, can in consequence have no harmony or uniformity among themselves. As the Bridegroom of the Song is spoken of by the self-same prophet as "the King in His beauty," and as having "no form nor comeliness," so His Bride, the Church, may be said to be "black like the tents of Kedar," (in herself,) and at the sametime "fair like the moon, and bright like the sun," (in Him). These seemingly inconsistent expressions are full of signification and beauty, when in a spiritual sense they are applied to Christ and His Church. It would be absurd to apply to any man what the prophet says of Christ, so it is likewise the height of absurdity to attempt to apply to any woman, what is said in the Song of the Church. All the inconsistencies and impossibilities which we referred to above, arising from applying the metaphors of our Song to any particular person or persons, at once disappear, and harmony, and important signification, and elevated sentiment at once appear, as soon as they are applied exclusively to Christ and His Church in the different stages and events of the history and plan of salvation.

SOLOMON, THE KING OF ISRAEL, THE SON OF DAVID, THE
AUTHOR OF THIS SONG.

We shall waste neither time nor thought in hunting those little German foxes that spoil the gardens in these rationalistic days—those secret agents of semi-infidelity, who, with their dark lanterns, stealthily enter or break into the Holy Place, lay hold on the sacred vessels of the Spirit, and presumptuously examine his right to the possession of them—daring to dispute the authenticity of the names of the sacred writers prefixed to books known as canonical, and acknowledged as such during thousands of years, both by Jew and Gentile, and by thousands of far abler and more competent critics than modern rationalists, and by millions of enlightened and sanctified children of God, who have found in these, in their blessed experience, the internal evidence of their Divine authority. We only deplore their daring, their sacrilege, their blindness, their wanderings in a wilderness

of darkness, and the lamentable consequences to themselves, and those whom their poison infects and destroys. The more we examine their stores, the more we find them full of chaff and stubble, the more we see that their webs are those of the spider strong enough to entangle flies but nothing more, and the more we discern their resemblance to those clever Cossacks on the borders of Russia, who, though unable to read or write, always find some faults and irregularities in the best of passports. As we trust that we proved the fallacies of their arguments and the errors of their conclusions, in our Introduction to the Book of Ecclesiastes, it is not necessary to say more of them here. We only add that there is no other portion of Scripture that has so much internal evidence regarding its author.

CANONICITY OF THE SONG OF SOLOMON.

In the following Commentary, as well as in the following portions of this Introduction, it will be seen how large a number of different passages, both of the Old and New Testament Scriptures, coincide in representing Jehovah's alliance with His Church, by the metaphors of Bridegroom and Bride, their mutual love, their tender endearments, and repeated assurances of reciprocal faithfulness, and by the figures of external and personal attraction, of magnificence, beauty, and splendour. If, for one moment, we cast a spiritual eye on these various passages, it is not difficult to discern in them direct references to this holy Song, and consequently testimonies to its inspiration. Indeed, it appears to us that this Song was to prophets and apostles as a reservoir of the treasures of Divine love existing between the Creator and His saved and sanctified creatures. Prophet and apostle, from Isaiah down to the disciple on the isle of Patmos, came to this exhaustless store-house of love, and borrowed from it arguments, expressions, and metaphors, in order to describe what, by revelation, they saw and felt of the mysterious and otherwise inexpressible love of the Lord of Hosts towards His redeemed flock—towards the Church which He bought, and sanctified, and prepared for Himself as a "crown of glory and a royal diadem" in His hand.

Though by the Divine decree, "blindness in part hath hap-

pened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in," as punishment for awful sin, still that nation always did, and still do, consider the Song of Solomon as a most holy revelation of Jehovah's everlasting and unchangeable love to His Church on earth; though, alas! they neither know the real Bridegroom of this Song, nor do they at present belong to the Church called in it His Bride. The earliest Rabbies of the Talmud said, "If all other inspired songs contained in the Holy Scriptures are *holy* (קֹדֶשׁ, Kodesh), the Song of Songs is most holy (קֹדֶשׁ קַדָּשִׁים, Kodesh Kadashim)," or "the holiest of all." It is a well-known fact, that in the primitive Christian Church, so long as love was ardent, evangelical doctrine fresh and pure, and spirituality prevalent, the Song of Solomon was (next to his father's Psalms) the favourite of all the truly great men and fathers in the Church. It was the source from which, in their sermons and addresses, they drew their choicest expressions for describing that love and Divine compassion which was manifested on Golgotha's cross. It was the fountain of spiritual joy and sweet encouragement to saint and martyr under all the circumstances of life and in all the scenes of death. The infinite and freely offered Divine love represented in it cheered the downcast, comforted the persecuted, despised, and suffering children of God, enriched the poor, exalted the meek, and showed the greatest of sinners that though his soul were black with sin and transgression, "like the tents of Kedar," still, when washed by faith in the blood of the Lamb, it would become comely "like the tapestries of Solomon." It healed the wounds of the repenting and broken-hearted backslider, as he beheld in it the wonderful love of God, ardent, steadfast, eternal to His once (nay often) backsliding but now repenting and faithful Church. It brought consolation, and revived the "hope of glory" to the dying pilgrim of Zion, when in faith he lifted up his eyes and beheld "what manner of love" awaited him before the throne of the "altogether lovely" and ever-loving Lamb of God, whose affection to His Church this Song so fully and splendidly describes.

If there were some pretending Christians (as alas there are too many now-a-days) who did not or would not understand how the mysteries of Divine love to the Church should be clothed in such figures and metaphors as this Song

contains, the obstacle surely lay in themselves and not in the holy oracle.* Such men hear with their ears, but do not understand, because their knowledge of the Scriptures is that of the letter, not of the spirit. With their eyes they see,

* Those of our readers who have not read the works of Bishop Patrick may find the following extracts from his Preface to the Song of Solomon interesting:—"That it was always looked upon as an holy book, treating of some spiritual and Divine matter, appears from its being placed among the rest of that kind. Nor has it been doubted of by any considerable number of men, either among Jews or Christians, but only by a few singular persons, who ought (as Theodoret speaks in his Preface to this Book) to have looked upon those blessed Fathers, who, placing this Song among the Divine Writings, took it to be fit for the uses of the Church, as men of greater judgment, and more spiritual than themselves. And they ought likewise to have considered, that we have, in effect, the testimony of the Holy Ghost Himself for its Divine authority; Ezra, a man excelling in virtue, and full of the Holy Spirit, having thought this worth of a room among these sacred volumes, which he gathered together after their return from the captivity of Babylon."

"And accordingly, a great many holy men have illustrated it with their commentaries and interpretations, or have adorned their writings with its sentences, such as Eusebius, Origen, Cyprian (who wore the crown of martyrdom), and others that were more ancient than these, and nearer to the times of the Apostles."

"It is unnecessary to mention those that followed after in future times, who all took this for a spiritual book. Let us only consider whether, if these things being so, it be reasonable for us to despise so many and such great persons, nay, the Holy Spirit Himself, and to follow our own private opinions, not hearkening to him that said, 'The thoughts of mortal man are vain, and our devices are but uncertain' (Wisd. ix. 14), or rather of St Paul (Rom. i. 21), 'They became vain in their imagination, and their foolish heart was darkened.' . . . "Nor doth it seem hard, either to find out what that spiritual matter is of which the wise man here treats (especially since all Christian writers have from the beginning applied this Song to Christ and his Church), or to give an account of the rise and original of such sublime contemplations, which I take to be this."

"The great prophet David, having plainly foretold that a far more glorious king than his son Solomon should one day arise (as we read in Ps. xlv.), and likewise more expressly prophesied of His Divinity, royal majesty, priesthood, &c. (Ps. cx.), and again resumed this argument just before his death, when he causeth his son Solomon to be crowned and to sit upon his throne (Ps. lxxii.), it stirred up the longing desires of Solomon after the coming of this most illustrious Prince, and made him study to have at least as clear a sight of Him as was possible to attain afar off. And that he might stir up the same desire in the whole nation after His appearing, he cast his meditations on this subject into a Song, in the form of a pastoral eclogue, in which several persons being introduced, who speak their parts, it may be called a dramatic poem," &c. &c.

Apart from what we think an inexplicable oversight common to all, viz., the historical character of the Song, we take the above as the fairest representation of the views of Christian authors about the spiritual substance of the Song.

but perceive not, because the mysteries of the Spirit are spiritually discerned, but are foolishness to the wise of this world. Whatever the pretensions of such men may have been (and are still), it is clear that they have not entered the regions of spiritual scenery with the regenerated sons of the Church of God. This world has not yet been crucified to them, nor they unto the world, and therefore the veil of carnal thoughts and feelings cloud their spiritual vision. When therefore they say, "These things so described cannot be holy," they should rather say, "These things, since they appear so to us, clearly indicate that we are not holy, that sin is yet strong within us, and that the eyes of our souls are not yet opened by the Spirit of God." But as this subject (*i.e.*, the propriety of the figures employed in the Song) will be separately treated in this Introduction, we pass on to other points.

PROBABLE PERIOD OF THE COMPOSITION OF THE SONG.

Solomon may be supposed to have composed this holy Song in the days of his highest glory, when "wisdom and understanding," riches and honour, were poured down upon him in great abundance by heaven's great King—when the Spirit of God had sanctified and elevated his soul, and his heart overflowed with Divine and pure love—when he had finished Jehovah's temple, in which the "glory of the Lord," the Angel of the Covenant, the heavenly Bridegroom, had come to dwell between the Cherubim in the most holy place—and when, in raptures of joy and adoration, he exclaimed, "Jehovah chose to dwell in the midst of darkness! I have surely built thee an house to dwell in, a settled place for thee to abide in for ever."* It appears to us that he may then be supposed to have been moved by the Holy Spirit to write that holiest of songs—a song which is the sum and substance of the history of Jehovah's alliance with His Church, with His chosen, beloved, and sanctified Bride, between whose breasts, as it were (*i.e.*, between the Cherubim—comp. Cant. i. 13), He came now to dwell permanently, until He should afterwards appear to her in a body of "flesh of her flesh, and

* 1 Kings viii. 12, 13.

bone of her bone," to be like *her brother* according to His humanity, to "suck the breasts of her mother" (Zion), and to show her that His "love to *her* was strong as death" (see Cant. viii. 1—6.)

THE LEADING FEATURES OF THE METAPHORS EMPLOYED IN
THIS SONG.

A custom prevailed among the people of Israel in the days of old (and which is still practised among them in several places of their dispersion), that matrimonial alliances (or espousals) were formed between parties at a very early period of life, the consummation of which (the marriage) was deferred till a long time after. This was especially the case when either of the parties was too young to contract the alliance, which was only engaged in by their parents or near relatives, who had to wait till the children were of age to confirm the agreement by their own mutual consent. Hence these early alliances often proved mutable and uncertain. Sometimes the early and premature love was supplanted by a new attachment, and so the alliance was for ever dissolved. At other times the bride, having been too young at the time of the engagement, and too inexperienced to appreciate the superior qualities of the bridegroom, and love to him having no strong hold on her heart, began to waver, and entertain thoughts of, and inclinations for, other suitors; while the bridegroom, resolved to have the object of his first, constant, and long-cherished love, waited patiently till she became ripe for judgment, and, taught by experience, should be brought to see that, although unsought and neglected, he was the best, the worthiest, and most faithful of all her lovers. In such a case, perceiving that his arms were still open to receive her, she cast herself into them with feelings of repentance, admiration, gratitude, confidence, and joy; and, with an overflowing heart, vowed unto him eternal attachment. On the other hand, the patient and faithful lover embraced his regained bride with a joy and satisfaction far fuller and deeper than he ever felt before; for, since he loved her above all other virgins, even when her heart was far from him, his delight is exceedingly great in finding himself the possessor of her undivided confidence, attachment, and love.

This is the case which the Holy Spirit selects as a metaphor to represent the divine, immutable, and everlasting love of Jesus to His dearly bought Bride the Church, who, having been too young (as to experience and judgment), under the first alliance, and not having appreciated the divine perfections and glorious qualities of her Bridegroom, wavers in her love, and often goes after other suitors—while He, constant and unwearied, bears with her, waits for her return, and continually woos her back to Himself—until at length brought to herself, in deep contrition for all her ingratitude, unfaithfulness, and transgression, and overpowered by the sense of His divine love and excellency, she yields herself up to Him, to be His wholly—His only—and His for ever. It is with regard to this renewed alliance with increased love and unmingled joy on both sides, that the Spirit announced before hand “As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.”* It is thus that John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, declared, “He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom who standeth and heareth him rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice; this my joy, therefore, is fulfilled.”† And our blessed Saviour Himself, when He said, “Can the children of the bridechamber mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?”‡ makes it evident that the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of the prophets, used that metaphor regarding Himself. He shows the same by the parable of the “Ten virgins,” and when He compared the kingdom of heaven to a marriage feast which a king has made for his son. It is this metaphor also that Paul employs when he says, “For I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”§ Moreover the angel said to John, “Come hither, I will shew thee the Bride, the Lamb’s wife.”|| This is the holy theme, the substance and soul, of Solomon’s Song of Songs, and this is the metaphor in which he enveloped the treasure of divine love.

* Is. lxii. 5.

† John iii. 29.

‡ Matt. ix. 15.

§ 2 Cor. xi. 2.

|| Rev. xxi. 9.—Comp. xix. 7—10.

DAVID LAID THE FOUNDATION OF THIS SONG.

It was by the mouth of his father David, the first king of Israel from whose family Messiah was to come, that the Spirit laid the foundation of this holy Song. The sweet singer of Israel said :—

1. My heart overfloweth with a precious oracle ;
I address my composition to the King ;
My tongue is like the pen of a swift writer.
2. Thou art fairer than the sons of men ;
Grace was poured into thy lips ;
Therefore hath God made thee an eternal blessing.
3. Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O thou mighty One,
Even thy glory and thy majesty.
4. And in this thy majesty mount quickly thy chariot
In the cause of truth and prostrated (or “humiliated”)
righteousness,
And let thy right hand lead thee to glorious deeds.
5. Thine arrows are sharpened :
Nations shall submit themselves unto thee,
When they pierce the heart of the King's enemies.
6. Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever ;
A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.
7. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated wickedness ;
Therefore, O God, hath thy God anointed thee
With the oil of gladness, above thy fellows.
8. All thy garments smell of myrrh and of aloes,
Out of the ivory palaces, wherein they made thee glad.
9. King's daughters are among thy admirers :
The consort is placed at thy right hand,
Adorned with the gold of Ophir.
10. Listen, O daughter, and consider this, and incline thine ear :
Forget also thine own people and thy father's house :—
11. Then shall the King set his desire upon thy beauty ;
For he is thy Lord, wherefore worship thou him.
12. The daughter of Tyre shall come with a present :
The richest among the nations shall entreat thy favour.

13. All the glories of the King's daughter must be (or, are) within ;
Which are more precious than her gold-embroidered robe.
14. Virgins, in rich attire, shall she lead to the King :
After her, her companions shall be brought to thee.
15. They shall be conducted with joy and exultation,
Thou shall bring them into the royal palace.
16. Instead of thy fathers shall be thy sons,
Whom thou shalt make princes in all the earth.
17. I will make thy name to be remembered by all generations :
Therefore shall nations praise thee, world without end.*

Here we see that David had already entered into the inner sanctuary, and penetrated within the mysterious veil of Messiah's love to his Bride the Church, and that, in briefly describing it, he employed the same figures as his son afterwards did more at large. But as the building of the temple was not granted to David—though he prepared the most of its materials—but by the divine decree was reserved to his illustrious son Solomon, the type of the Prince of Peace, so it was likewise reserved for him to complete, in this holy Song, the celebration of Jehovah's divine love to His Church, and her ardent love to her heavenly Lord and Bridegroom. But while David in the above quoted Psalm celebrated only Messiah's first advent, and the beginning of the formation of the New Testament Church, Solomon celebrates the alliance and relation of the Bridegroom and Bride from the beginning. He sings of the first covenant-conditions, the mutual promises, the affectionate interchanges of reciprocal praise, and the tender embraces of divine love that took place during these successive stages of the ancient covenant—the repeated warnings and touching admonitions addressed by the merciful Bridegroom to his inexperienced and forgetful Bride—her backslidings and their deplorable consequences—her deep repentance and eager inquiries after her offended and withdrawn Lord—His sudden appearance after a long absence, and His promises of a speedy coming in the flesh to establish the everlasting covenant, and bring everlasting

* This beautiful Psalm is copied from the author's "New Translation and Exposition of the Book of Psalms," where the reader will find not only the explanation of the metaphors, and their bearing upon Christ and His Church, but also critical Notes explaining the deviations in the translation of the Hebrew Text.

righteousness—the fulfilment of that promise, their mutual delight, His sacrifice, death, and resurrection, the charge to the Apostles, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the conversion of many thousands of the children of Zion, the calling in of the Gentiles, and the formation of the first Christian Church among them. Neither of the royal penmen, father nor son, went any farther; for the Spirit reserved what goes beyond their prophetic vision, for the beloved disciple of Christ—John, and his revelation, where it is continued to the consummation of all things.

ORIGINAL AND PRINCIPAL DIVISIONS OF THIS SONG INTO PARTS.

Though the Song of Solomon—like the sublime song of Moses which he composed as a testimony unto Israel before his departure—was at the time of its composition half historical (regarding past events), and half prophetic (regarding events foreseen and foretold by the Spirit), still, as these prophecies have all received their literal fulfilment at the respective times indicated by the inspired author, the whole Song is now purely and entirely historical to us. Hence there must be natural divisions in it, corresponding to the chief events and conspicuous periods in the history of the ancient Church. Moreover, this being a *Song of love* celebrating the condescending and everlasting love of God to his Church, it was to be expected that the inspired penman should divide his composition into parts, each of which should begin with some remarkable transaction, important dialogue, serious intercourse, or mutual protestation of love and attachment between Bridegroom and Bride, and that each part should end with some extraordinary manifestation of Jehovah's love to His Bride, the chosen and covenanted Church.

Now if we examine sacred history with regard to the Church of God—if we glance over the long period that elapsed between Israel's first entering into covenant at Mount Sinai when they were sprinkled by Moses with the blood of the covenant sacrifices, and the mysterious scenes of Calvary when the covenant was for ever sealed with the blood of the Divine Testator—we discover *three* distinct and extraordinary manifestations of the love of God to His Church, and of His presence in her midst.

THE FIRST MANIFESTATION AND THE FIRST PART OF THE SONG.

The first of these great manifestations occurred at the dedication of the tabernacle in the wilderness, when, on the eighth day of that feast, at the offering of the sacrifices for the *whole nation and Church*, the glory of the Lord appeared to the whole people, and fire from heaven came down upon the altar, which when "all the people saw, they shouted and fell on their faces."* In the course of the following exposition of the Song, it will be seen that it begins with celebrating Israel's awakening and repentance after their great sin (*i.e.*, that of the golden calf), and God's pardoning love, counsels and consolations to that chosen nation, and her deep repentance and promises of future obedience. That it next celebrates the building of the tabernacle and its sacred utensils, Israel's joy in anticipation of the great privileges and benefits which would accrue to them by that divine favour—and last the above-mentioned glorious event, *i.e.*, the dedication of the tabernacle, and the manifestation of the Lord's glory, when the Bride of the Song is made to exclaim, "He brought me into the banqueting house (*i.e.*, into the sanctuary), and his banner over me is love. . . . His left hand is under my head, and His right hand embraceth me."† Here then is the climax of joy on the part of the Bride at the extraordinary manifestation of the Bridegroom's love to her, and at the sure tokens of its durability and constancy, in that he graciously condescended to come and dwell in the midst of her, in the sanctuary which, by His orders, she had prepared for Him. In that ecstasy of holy joy, the sacred poet represents the Bride as if jealous and suspicious about other nations, who, by seeing her glory and splendour, might become her rivals and supplant her love, and therefore he makes her conjure them (under the metaphor of "daughters of Jerusalem") not to "stir up nor disturb that love until it become ripe,"‡ or perfected, *i.e.*, until it be sealed with the last seal, with the precious blood of the Divine Bridegroom. Here then we see that the original and natural end of Part I. is at verse 7 of chap. ii.

* Lev. ix. 22—24; comp. Exod. xl. 34—38; Num. ix. 15—23.

† Cant. ii. 4—6.

‡ Verse 7—see Exposition.

THE SECOND MANIFESTATION, AND THE SECOND PART
OF THE SONG.

The second great and extraordinary manifestation of Jehovah's love to His ancient Church occurred at the dedication of Solomon's temple on Mount Moriah. There and then the same glorious scenes were renewed as those at the dedication of the portable tabernacle at the foot of Mount Sinai. Fire from heaven descended on the altar of sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple. In the following exposition the reader will see that the second part, which begins with verse 8 of chap. ii., celebrates Israel's march through the wilderness—their passing the river Arnon to fight the Kings of Bashan—their crossing the Jordan to fight their way into the land of promise—their vicissitudes, during the long and dreary night of the period of the Judges—Israel's finding at last their long absent Covenant-Angel in the days of David, when the Bride brought the Bridegroom, with shouts of joy and adoration, "into her mother's house," *i.e.*, when first she transferred the holy ark of God from Kirjath-jearim to Mount Zion into the temporary tabernacle which David had prepared, and when at last He appeared to her in His divine splendour and celestial majesty on the dedication of Solomon's magnificent temple. Here again divine love reached an extraordinary climax, and the joy-filled and adoring Bride is again represented by the sacred poet as having, as if in a fit of jealousy and fear for rivals, renewed her adjuration of the Gentile nations not to "stir up nor disturb that love until it became ripe" or perfected on Calvary. Thus we see that with verse 5 of chap. iii. the second part terminates.

THE THIRD MANIFESTATION AND THE THIRD PART
OF THE SONG.

The third, greatest, and last manifestation of Jehovah's love to His ancient Church was the personal appearance of the Bridegroom in a body of flesh, the coming of the Covenant Angel into His temple; and in the following work it will likewise be seen that the third part of this Song, begin-

ning with verse 6 of chap. iii., celebrates the glories of the Church during the bright days of her highest prosperity—then foretells her fall, captivity, repentance, and restoration—and passing through the period of the later prophets (Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi), and alluding to the promises made by them, and their partial fulfilment, ends with the coming of the Saviour in the shape of “a brother,” and with the joy of the Bride, who again exclaimed, “His left hand is under my head, and His right hand embraces me.”* Here again, and for the last time, Solomon makes the Bride conjure the Gentile nations, but with the marked difference, that while, on the two former occasions, the daughter of Zion said, “I adjure you, . . . if ye stir up,” &c., she now says, “Wherefore should ye stir up?” *i. e.*, seeing that the promised Lord, “the desire of all nations,” and our common Saviour, has now come to remove the long existing *partition wall*, and to open the doors of the sanctuary to Gentile and Jew alike, why then should ye be impatient now? Wait a while, until all be fulfilled and prepared, and when I shall myself receive orders to invite and lead you into the “King’s palace,” &c. Here we see that with verse 4 of chap. viii. the third part of the Song terminates.

The last ten verses form the conclusion of the Song. They are exceedingly rich in comprehensive matter. Christ’s death and resurrection, His meeting the disciples on the mountain in Galilee, His intercourse with them, the great commission given unto them, the conversion of the many thousands of Jews at Jerusalem, and the first formation of Christian Churches among the Gentile nations by the instrumentality of the converted “little sister,” are celebrated in them.

In the sequel it will be seen that several subdivisions might have been made at places where great leaps over many years occur, where the history of a distinct period ends, and where the next passage or chapter takes up the historic thread with events belonging to many years after. But we are of opinion that the three distinct original divisions are quite sufficient for every purpose, and therefore, in the following commentary, the book is divided into the *three* principal parts above mentioned, with the conclusion.

* Chap. viii. 3.

THE METAPHORS OF LOVE AND FIGURES OF BEAUTY EMPLOYED
IN THIS HOLY SONG—THE PROPRIETY OF REPRESENTING BY
THESE EMBLEMS THE UNION AND COMMUNION OF CHRIST
AND HIS REDEEMED CHURCH—LIGHT AND LOVE.

The beloved apostle of Christ tells us that "God is light," and that "God is love;" and it is evident that the apostle intended, by these positive declarations, to elevate *light* and *love* above, and to distinguish them from, all the other attributes ascribed to the ever-blessed and adorable Deity. Justice, holiness, mercy, truth, &c., are so many attributes of God, but it is not said that God is justice, or that God is truth, while the Holy Spirit declares to us that "God is light," and that "God is love."

The benevolent Creator of the universe, the eternal Jehovah, who is light, has, in His infinite wisdom and divine love, diffused material light throughout every region of creation, to animate and make happy the innumerable hosts which He has called into existence for His own glory and honour. Though this fact may remain unobserved and unadmired by the eyes of sinful and shortsighted man, as by those of the lower and unintelligent creatures, and though the infidel philosopher, and the blind and self-degrading materialist, may see no greater wonders in light than in darkness, yet the enlightened child of God beholds in that wonderful element the emblem of the ever-living and omniscient God,—the representative of that immaterial, uncreated, and glorious Being who is "light, and in whom there is no darkness at all." So, in like manner, did the Almighty Creator, who "is love," diffuse love in the hearts of all His living creatures, to sweeten their span of life, and to make their existence in this material world cheerful and interesting. Though in the lower animals the limited nature of that love may be regarded as mere instinctive affection and natural attachment, combined with and deriving strength from other sources and circumstances meeting together in the laws and course of nature; and though, alas! even in intelligent beings, it may be abused, defiled, and drowned in base passion and carnal selfishness, still the same love in the heart of a sanctified individual is capable of rising to the highest moral

beauty and dignity, and of showing, by its celestial fruits, that it is an emanation from heaven, and the refulgent image of its glorious Author, who is Love.

“ Love refines

The thoughts, and heart enlarges ; has his seat

In reason, and is judicious ; is the scale

By which to heavenly love thou mayest ascend.”*

LIGHT AND LOVE ARE INSEPARABLE, BOTH IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH.

Light is not only the principal foundation of all material existence—hence the first in creation—but it is also the principal medium by which the great Creator gathers in, directly and indirectly, the fruits of His mighty and marvellous works. He called into existence the glorious armies of heaven, that they may rejoice in and feed upon His light, and by it taste of His infinite love, and adore and magnify Him throughout eternity. He also made that wonderfully constituted creature, *man*, with a twofold nature, a body and spirit—a material tabernacle inhabited by an immortal soul. Endowed with organic vision, man is able to behold the light, and hence to contemplate and admire the wonderful works of God which that light exposes to his view, and thus a great field for the exercise of tenderness and love is opened to his heart and soul. But while he is thus reaping the beneficent influences of material light through his equally material sight, with his spiritual eye (or intellect emanating from his soul) man is angel-like, able to behold, admire, and love with his whole soul the great fountain of spiritual and immaterial light, even the Divine luminary of heaven, who spreads lustre and glory throughout the blissful regions of inconceivable immensity, and of whom created and material light is but a feeble emblem.

As light and love are inseparable in the self-existing and ever-blessed Deity, so are they united in their existence, as well as in their rich and beneficent influences here below. Take away light from this world, and life would be impos-

* Paradise Lost, Book ix.

sible; every beautiful and cheerful creature would speedily decay and perish under the darkness of perpetual night. Take away love from this world, and life would be unbearable and existence insupportable. The beauty and the glory of the earth and heavens would no longer excite admiration, and the varied and beneficent provisions of the blessed Creator for man's well-being would no longer afford satisfaction or pleasure. All would be confusion, discontent, and wretchedness. It is the very same with regard to man in his spiritual existence and higher destiny. Without spiritual light and heavenly love he is "as grass, and all his goodness as the flower of the field." "But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin."* "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us."† Love is a beautiful, ever-flourishing, and most precious rose, even in the midst of the thorns of human corruption. True, if not purified by religion, it is vain and perishing in its nature, and often delusive and fatal in its consequences, but then it is because a vile passion has been mistaken for love, or at least has taken the ascendancy and poisoned its benign influences; hence the words which the sublime poet put into the mouth of Adam's angelic tutor—

"In loving thou dost well, in passion not,
Wherein true love consists not."

In regenerated and sanctified man, love is a flower of Paradise, though flourishing in a moral wilderness. It is a celestial seed, sown in his heart, to yield precious fruits to the honour of God. It is a branch of the most glorious of Divine attributes, engrafted in the soul of the pilgrim to heaven's Zion. It is the Spirit of God dwelling in a temple which He has prepared for Himself. It is He who teaches His children how to taste of and appreciate, rejoice in and adore the love and Divine compassion of God, who was graciously pleased to give existence to angels and men, in order to make them participate in intellectual and spiritual joy, in ever radiant, ever smiling, and unmingled love, and adore Him world without end.

* 1 John i. 7.

† 1 John iv. 12.

LIGHT AND LOVE IN PARADISE BEFORE THE FALL.

When the newly-created intellectual man, and prince of the six days' fabric, looked around him and beheld the beauty, the harmony, and the splendour of all the subjects of his dominion, all rejoicing in his presence, and submitting cheerfully to the gentle sway of his sceptre over them, his bosom must have heaved with love and tenderness, and his innocent and holy soul have been filled with joy and satisfaction. But that soul, continually looking upwards, must have quickly raised him from earth to heaven, from the creature to the Creator. The love which swelled his bosom when contemplating the beauties and splendour bestowed on the creatures of a day, took wings, and with the swiftness of lightning mounted to heaven, to the throne of "Him who is love." There he fixed his admiration and joy, his love and happiness, and praised and adored the giver of all things, for the life, the light, the vision, and the intellect which he bestowed on him, and the love he had planted in his heart, for the lovely creatures over which He had given him dominion, and which were capable of awakening such exalted and animating sentiments in his soul. Thus created, light and organic vision led man to celestial light through the medium of his soul's spiritual sight—so likewise the love which nature inspired here below led him by degrees to angelic love, pure and divine. Joy in the creature ended in joy in the Creator; and praise, gratitude, and adoration, were the spiritual fruits which, though they began to grow and blossom in an earthy soil, ripened in heaven to the glory of the great Jehovah, who is light and love.

But Adam's happiness was not yet complete, nor had his large and loving heart sufficient scope to expand so long as he was alone. The allwise and benevolent Creator, therefore, proceeded to plant the last, most precious, and most important branch of love in his heart, the fruits of which were again destined for heaven.

"Hail, wedded love, mysterious law, true source
Of human offspring by thee,
Founded in reason, loyal, just, and pure,
Relations dear, and all the charities—
Of father, son, and brother, first were known."*

* Paradise Lost, Book iv.

Exceedingly great must have been Adam's joy when his Maker presented him with that precious gift, with that perfection of beauty and gracefulness, formed by His own hand, and given to him, not as a rival, but as a worthy associate in Paradise, as an aid in his daily occupations, and as a fit companion for serious meditation, praise, and adoration, being, like himself, endowed with a rational and immortal soul, and having, like him, come forth from her Maker's hand innocent and holy. Surely this increase of love and happiness on earth, produced in Adam's soul an equal increase of gratitude and thankfulness to God, in the exercise of which, too, he had now a real "help meet for him." Certainly whenever that happy pair began to contemplate and admire together the beauties of nature, the luxuriant and magnificent scenes by which they were surrounded, they would not long continue their conversation ere their souls lifted them heavenwards to the divine source of all existence, to the fountain of light and love, there to complete their admiration, there to centre their love, and to break forth in strains of seraphic praise to their God.

If this was the case with regard to the outward things that surrounded the parents of the human race, how could it be otherwise with regard to each other? Clad in "native beauty," like the lilies, and never thinking of hiding their God-like shape by covering it with perishable garments of earthly workmanship—

" So passed they naked on, nor shunned the sight
Of God or angel, for they thought no ill:
So hand in hand they pass'd, the loveliest pair
That ever since in love's embraces met."*

To veil the beauty which the celestial sculptor had bestowed on their bodies would have been deemed by innocence as great an outrage against the goodness of their Maker as an attempt to cover the sun in sackcloth, or a preference of eternal night to the brilliancy of day. All the magnificent robes of Solomon and his queens would have been regarded like dark clouds veiling the sun, or as fading leaves wreathing a beautiful bush of roses. Looking on each other with great delight, beholding in each other their own image, and in

* Paradise Lost, Book iv.

both the image of their heavenly Father, the likeness of Him who had made angels and men, they could not but rejoice and be happy. But if they did, individually and reciprocally, rejoice in their existence; trace that joy to its source, and you will find it in the self-existing and eternal Jehovah, who in His boundless love was pleased to impart existence to millions of intelligences. Follow that joy and you will find it pursuing its course heavenward, and pouring itself into the bosom of Him whose divine presence fills the heavens with splendour and felicity. Then did their pure hearts heave with tender love, and mutual delight, expressed by endearing smiles :

“ For smiles from reason flow,
To brute denied, and are of love the food ;
Love, not the lowest end of human life.”*

Trace up that lovely stream, and you will find its source in the bosom of the Ancient of Days, who is Love, whence issue rivers of love, compassion, and benevolence, which circulate through the vast dominions of His empire, to cheer, delight, and make happy all the creatures of His hand. Follow that stream in its course and you will see that, after having cheered, enriched, and fertilized all the regions of creation, it pours itself again into the ocean of celestial and everlasting love, whence it issued and whither it has returned to flow forth again.

Now, let us for a moment suppose that there had been transmitted to us some of the early dialogues of mutual affection and admiration which had taken place in Paradise between Adam and his beloved and beautiful partner, when his Maker brought her to him in order to put an end to his loneliness. Had even these contained the most vivid delineation of beauty, and the most gorgeous description of the attractiveness and splendour which the Creator bestowed on the first human pair, while yet not disfigured by the consequences of sin and passion; and had they been embellished with the striking figures employed by the princely poet and heavenly inspired author of this magnificent Song, what shade of impropriety, what thought of indecency, could have been alleged against them? Could angelic purity have blushed or been

* Paradise Lost, Book ix.

offended at the delineation of innocence? Could innocence have suffered by the picture of beauty? Could a pure and holy soul have discovered aught of unseemliness in a description or an expression of admiration of any of Jehovah's handiworks? No! for when passion and shame were unknown to the soul, because sin had not yet entered, love was not passion but part and essence of his life. The more love was nourished and stimulated by the contemplation and admiration of beauty, the swifter was her flight to the bosom of her Creator; for then heaven and earth were united by the golden chain of man's pure and holy soul, and no emotion, or desire, or love, or joy, or pleasure, could arise in man's bosom without producing, in abundance, precious fruits for the honour and glory of Him who "created all things for Himself." Then spiritual light continually dazzled and eclipsed material light; Divine love continually swallowed up human love; all earthly magnificence was obscured by celestial splendour; all created beauty became a mere shapeless shadow by a single glance of heaven's majesty; and all earthly joy was annihilated in the soul by a single taste of the blissful felicity of the regions above. Still, as these holy souls inhabited tabernacles of flesh and blood, it was by the means of that ladder that they climbed to heaven. Their light and sight, admiration, joy, and love, all began in the midst, and by means, of the various objects of material creation immediately surrounding them, while their intellectual souls within them continued the work of forming the spiritual cord that guided them into heaven, and made them mount from creation to the Creator.

LIGHT AND LOVE IN FALLEN BUT RESTORED AND SANCTIFIED MAN.

Whatever allowances must be made for, and whatever differences must be acknowledged in, the relations and circumstances of man after he had fallen and had become the slave of passion, polluted thoughts and carnal lusts, we must always keep in mind that Christ came to redeem him by His sacrifice, to wash him with His precious blood; to sanctify him by His holy Spirit; to cover him with the robe of His righteousness, and to restore him unto God, as

a dear child unto a loving Father. It is the same Restorer and Redeemer of fallen humanity who says, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father who is in Heaven is perfect." And in what else does that perfection consist but in *light and love*! "Ye are the light of the world." "Let your light so shine before men," &c. Here is *light*, and next comes *love*—love to God and love to man. "He that bath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him."* "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you that ye also love one another."† And the beloved disciple who heard these words from the mouth of Divine love, and recorded them for our benefit, adds in another place, "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."‡ And this declaration is made with respect to that pure and sanctified love which every child of God must possess and practise with regard to his fellow-men, as well as with regard to God; as the same Apostle says again, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. . . . If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us. . . . And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."§

Christian reader, remember that the above elevated standard of light and love was given by the Holy Spirit, not to innocent Adam in Paradise, but to those of his fallen race, who, though *in* the world, are separate *from* it, and are no more *of* it—who, through Christ and His cross, are crucified unto the world, and the world unto them—who, regenerated by the Holy Spirit to newness of life, and washed from their sins in the blood of the Lamb, are dead unto sin and passion, have their lives hid in Jesus Christ, walk no more "after the flesh, but after the Spirit," and who, though still inhabitants of a tabernacle of flesh and of a sinful world, confess that they are pilgrims and strangers on earth, and are continually looking to and preparing for "the city that hath foundations, whose founder and builder is God." What-

* John xiv. 21.

† John xiii. 34.

‡ 1 John iv. 8.

§ 1 John iv. 7, 12, 16.

ever, therefore, may be the character, behaviour, feelings, and opinions of the multitudes of mere *nominal Christians*, who have a "form of godliness," but by their walk and conversation "deny the power of it," one thing is evident, that according to the passages quoted above, the regenerated and sanctified children of God are so far re-established and re-elevated to primeval purity and perfection, that they *are light*, have the love of God thus *perfected* in them, dwell in love, and thus dwell in God and God in them. But to have the love of God *perfected* in their souls, so as to become the temples of the living God, who is love, is to have no connection on earth which can displease Him, to have sin crucified in the flesh, and every unlawful love or desire for ever banished, to place one's affections upon nothing, but what is according to his will, and directly or indirectly conducive to the promotion of His glory. The children of light must be, in the fullest and most obvious sense of the words, what the Saviour and His Apostles described them to be. There can be no exaggeration in the Redeemer's words, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect;" and we have seen that this perfection chiefly and permanently consists *in love*. This is clear from the passages just quoted from John, and that, too, is the "more excellent way" of the Apostle Paul, who elevates love above everything, and declares that no gift, or work, or sacrifice, or devotional feeling, avails or profits anything, unless love be the source and motive, the beginning and end of all things, even of faith and hope; for love is of God, and God is love. Seeing that love occupies such a prominent position among the Christian graces and gifts, that it must be perfected in the soul of every pilgrim of Zion here below, in order that he may become the temple of God, and that "God who is love" might dwell in him, it becomes us to ask, How is that heavenly plant engrafted in us; and what is the process by which it is brought to perfection? To which we answer: As it is here on earth where we who were once darkness became light through Him who "is the true Light," and by the influence of the Holy Spirit, who came to lead us in the way of all truth, and to make us walk in Jehovah's light, so it is here on earth, where we, who were once filled with hatred and unholy passions, must, by the aid of the self-same

Spirit, cherish and exercise love to perfection. Though there are many gifts and graces which the child of God receives all at once, and in their full vigour and maturity, love alone is sown as it were in earthly soil, takes root, springs up, and gradually becomes vigorous, yea perfect, here below, while its branches reach heaven, and its precious fruits are Jehovah's portion and delight. Thus we see that love to our neighbour stands side by side with love to our God—both together are the sum and substance of the law and the prophets, the spiritual life, the moral existence of the child of the Spirit; but still the one branch is on earth and the other in heaven. It is the same ladder as that by which, as we said above, innocent and holy Adam in Paradise mounted into heaven whenever love animated his soul here; so it must be with every one who, "risen with Christ, seeks those things which are above," and who, "being rooted and grounded in love, is able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." As Christ who is the brightest manifestation of God, who is love, came down from heaven to plant that celestial flower here below, to water it with His blood, to give it the increase through His Spirit, and then ascended into heaven to gather the fruits which His love produces on earth, so every individual Christian who has received such a celestial grain of love into his heart must foster and water, purify and exercise it on earth, before it can produce the demanded and expected fruits for heaven. Though in the commandment love to God stands of course before the love to man; in practice, love must begin on earth to reach heaven; "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"* Hence it is, that the same Apostle who said, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth,"† also said, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it;"‡ again, "Teach young women to love their husbands."§ Here we see a pure love to the creature, not only compared to the love which we owe to our Creator, but even to that mysterious divine

* 1 John iv. 20.

† Col. iii. 2.

‡ Eph. v. 25.

§ Tit. ii. 4.

love of Christ to His Church. But this is also a love which, though planted and nourished on earth, must reach heaven, and bear precious fruits to the honour of God, from whom it came and to whom it must return.

Of such regenerated and sanctified souls, our Lord says, "Therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light."* The Christian, though in a certain sense he is separated from the world, and no more belongs to it, still remains in it all the days of his earthly career, and moves, acts, and loves. Still his relations to it have become entirely changed. With his eyes he still beholds all that is beautiful and admirable in nature, but he no longer burns with desire for anything not his own, for he has before his eyes the eternally glorious "things which the Lord hath prepared for them that love Him," and which throw into the shade everything vain and perishing. A large diamond he still regards as a precious stone, and admires its brilliancy, but he will no more set his heart upon it than he would on a dazzling star of night, for by faith he possesses the richest gem of heaven. All his desires are concentrated on Him who has brought him from darkness to light, and who has prepared for him a crown of glory after he has in Christ overcome this world and its deceiving vanities. With the same single eye he admires the beautiful and the admirable in all God's handiworks, but never allows "his heart to walk after his eyes;" for his "body as well as his soul, which was redeemed with a costly price, is now for the Lord, and the Lord for his body." In exercising love as above described (and no matter on whom, or in what measure, if within the rule and commandment of heaven,) he loves, not as the world from selfishness, passion, and carnal desire, but freely, sincerely, disinterestedly, as sowing here to reap in heaven, as loving here because it is the will of heaven—always walking in light with his eye fixed on Him whom he must love supremely, and who so loved him as to give Himself to death for the salvation of his guilty soul, and unto whom belong the fruits of all sanctified love and affection.

* Luke xi. 34.

DIVINE LIGHT AND DIVINE LOVE REPRESENTED BY METAPHORS.

The Holy Spirit, in revealing to man the high mysteries of Jehovah's sanctuary, often adopted figures and metaphors, expressions and titles, by which objects of the material creation are designated, in order to convey an idea of celestial objects, to him otherwise incomprehensible and inconceivable. Thus the same word רוח (Ruach) which signifies "wind," is also employed throughout the Scriptures to denote the "Spirit of God;" and even our Lord in describing the mysterious work of the Spirit in the soul of man says, "The wind bloweth where it listeth . . . so is every one that is born of the Spirit."* The glory of God is often compared to fire, "a flame of fire," "a devouring fire;" and what other figures from material creation, what other words taken from human language, could be so expressive and appropriate as these? So likewise the spiritual light which acts on our souls, and even that mysterious and glorious light of Him who is light, are described by the light of the sun, or by other artificial material light; "The Lord is my light"—"O send thy light and thy truth, let them lead me"—"Thy word is a lamp and a light to my path"—"The people that walked in darkness saw a great light"—"The Lord shall be to thee an everlasting light"—"And with him dwelleth the light"—"They need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them the light." We thus see how spiritual light is compared to material light; how a divine influence only conceivable by the eye of the sanctified soul, to material substance seen by the eye of flesh.

If, in order to convey to man an idea of Jehovah's intelligence and purity, the Holy Spirit chose the sun and material light as an emblem, is it not most natural and suitable that He should convey to him the idea of Jehovah's love by comparing it to the tenderest and closest affection known among human beings? In the Scriptures we repeatedly find the love of God compared to that of a parent—"As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him;"† and again, "Can a woman forget her sucking child? . . . yea, she may forget, yet will I not forget thee."‡

* John iii. 8.

† Psa. ciii. 13.

‡ Isa. xlix. 15.

But whatever be the strength, tenderness, and disinterestedness of a parent's love to his child, the Holy Spirit represents that between husband and wife as the most close, sacred, and endearing on earth, and it is this which he everywhere employs as the emblem of the everlasting love of Christ to His Church. As her lover, bridegroom, husband, Christ is exhibited under every aspect and relation of affection, tenderness, solicitude, care, protection, provision, munificence, forbearance, constancy, and fidelity—"I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee;"* "I will betroth thee unto me for ever;"† "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty, he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy, he will rest (or persevere) in his love, he will rejoice over thee with singing;"‡ "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them and carried them all the days of old."§

Can anything be imagined more noble, more expressive, and more touching than the sublime language of the Psalmist when he apostrophises the Church of God by this splendid and only suitable metaphor—"Listen, O daughter, and consider this, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; then shall the King set his delight on thy beauty; for He is thy Lord, wherefore worship thou Him." Here is the Church of Christ invited to abandon the world and all its vanities, all her former attachments and earthly affections, and cast herself into the outstretched arms of her Saviour, to lay herself as a living sacrifice on the altar of Divine love, firmly resolved to walk humbly before the Lord, to follow Him even in thorny mazes, or through fire and water, yea even through the valley of the shadow of death, always adoring Him and never murmuring, always putting entire confidence in His faithfulness, and worshipping even the rod with which He may chastise her for her errors and backslidings. Thus the King would delight in her beauty, would come and dwell with her, and hold holy communion with her soul, and make her go on from strength to strength, from perfection to perfection, until she became perfect in one, and rejoice with and in her Lord throughout eternity. What other relation, alliance, or

* Jer. xxxi. 3.

† Hos. ii. 19.

‡ Zeph. iii. 17.

§ Isa. lxiii. 9.

love, so sacred, so close, or so strong, could the Spirit have chosen as so suitable a metaphor for so holy a subject? Here is an alliance founded in love, confirmed by a solemn covenant, recommended and consecrated in Paradise by Him who is love—an alliance which, if formed between two God-fearing and sanctified souls, is to be for ever united in body and soul, in joy as in sorrow, in happiness as in affliction, in peace as in tribulation—one in faith, hope, sanctification, holy living, praise and prayer, and in instructing and dedicating to God the fruits of their union, their sanctified offspring, that after their own departure hence these children shall be in their place the servants of the living God, and His witnesses on earth. Is not this a metaphor most worthy to express Jehovah's eternal covenant of love to His chosen and sanctified Church on earth, unto whom He said, "Thy Maker is thy husband, the Lord of Hosts is His name."*

At various times the chosen, loved, and covenanted Bride became unfaithful to her covenant, ungrateful to her Divine Husband, Lord, and Redeemer, so much so that He had reason to complain, and say, "Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the Lord."† But as the material sun was not impaired by man's sin, so neither was the love of God by the defection of those whom He had chosen to be the heirs of His glory. Though the view of that immutable Divine love was often hid by the clouds of their transgression, He continually said, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings."‡ "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee; in an influx of wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer."§ Jehovah's destined Bride, affianced to Him in the everlasting covenant, formed ages before she was created, needed to be redeemed from the guilt and sin into which she had fallen. But when raised up from her degradation, purified from her pollution, and renewed and sanctified by the Spirit, she becomes sensible of the greatness of his love, which appears to her so wonderful in nothing as in his endurance and long-suffering toward her during her departure and transgression, and in the

* Isa. liv. 5.

† Jer. iii. 20.

‡ Jer. iii. 22.

§ Isa. liv. 7, 8.

means He employed to rescue her, and betroth her unto Him for ever in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. She therefore exclaims, "Behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God ;"* "I will go and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now ;"† "O Lord our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us, but by thee only will we make mention of thy name."‡

THE FIGURES AND METAPHORS OF BEAUTY EMPLOYED IN
THE SONG.

Both the holy Psalmist and his illustrious son Solomon, as well as other prophets, when speaking of God and His Church under the metaphor of Bridegroom and Bride, present the Bridegroom and Bride under figures displaying the highest personal beauty, attraction, and splendour, thereby representing Divine majesty, love, justice, and faithfulness on the one side, and imputed righteousness, faith, hope, ardent attachment, entire submission, and holy joy on the other. And what other pictures and metaphors could the Spirit better employ for such a theme than those which have been selected? At his creation, man was, of all the living creatures of the world, the highest model of beauty and excellence, physical and moral—

"Of living creatures, new to sight and strange,
Two of far nobler shape, erect and tall,
God-like erect, with native honour clad,
In native majesty seemed lords of all ;
And worthy seem'd ; for in their looks divine
The image of their glorious Maker shone,
Truth, wisdom, sanctitude, severe and pure.

For contemplation he and valour formed ;
For softness she, and sweet attractive grace ;
He for God only, she for God in him."§

Or, in briefer and more emphatic terms, as the inspired Psalmist says of him, "For thou hast made him a little

* Jer. iii. 22. † Hos. ii. 7. ‡ Isa. xxvi. 13.

§ Paradise Lost, Book iv.

lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour." Take away the guilty shame caused by sin which the second Adam came to nail to the cross ; replace the " beauty of holiness " which he came to restore, and man is still the master-piece of the great Creator on earth, yea the image and likeness of his God. Though the fall and its deplorable consequences deteriorated the race in every respect, bodily, mentally, and morally, yet traces of the original excellencies remain ; and when, through the grace of God, invested again with that " beauty of holiness," man and woman shine forth in a measure of their primeval loveliness and grace ; and love, pure, holy, and abiding, dwells in their hearts. But virtue is essential to all genuine and lasting affection. Beauty may awaken love, but can never sustain it without virtue, whereas the latter will, even in the absence of beauty, beget and keep alive the strength of affection (the pure love and tender affection that lived in the heart of David and Jonathan were nourished by virtue alone), but when found in connexion with external beauty, it ever imparts to it its highest charms. This is brought out very conspicuously in the Song of Solomon. It is not the external beauty of the Bride which produced and nourished that ardent Divine love in the heart of the Bridegroom ; for the Bride herself confesses that she is black and sunburnt, and, as it were, destitute of pretensions to beauty. But when she alleges that she is " comely like the curtains of Solomon," it is by the moral qualities bestowed on her by Divine grace, and the robe of righteousness with which her Bridegroom has arrayed her ; and this is what has kindled and nourishes that love in the heart of the Redeemer. In the course of the following Commentary it will be seen by every impartial and unprejudiced reader that every figure of corporeal beauty employed in this Song is only a shell enclosing a moral kernel, a deep and comprehensive spiritual meaning.

Now, we trust that enough has been said in this Introduction to prove that to the sanctified mind, to the child of God whose soul is washed in the blood of Christ, whose heart is renewed, whose sinful passions are nailed to the cross, and whose body has become the temple of God, there can appear no more impropriety in the metaphors employed in this Song than in comparing the spiritual light of heaven to the sun,

to a candle, or a lamp, or the body of the Divine Redeemer to the temple of Solomon. If it be objected to the figures of female beauty and attraction, that they may scandalise the children of this world, we answer that the pearls of Jehovah's sanctuary were neither made for, nor intended, to be cast before swine. Indeed, the infidel does not need to proceed from the beginning of the Bible till he reach the Song of Solomon, to find subjects which he may twist to his own condemnation, or doctrines which he may convert into "a savour of death unto death" to himself; for in the very first pages of the Holy Scriptures he will find material sufficient for that purpose. This celestial treasure of Divine love was provided for the children of the kingdom, for the sons and daughters of that inheritance of everlasting love which was displayed on Calvary. To all of them, even in this present sojourn and pilgrimage, it is the daily source of sweetest refreshment, joy, and consolation, and is found "better than life;" and they will always find it so until their souls are "bound up in the bundle of life with Jehovah their God," when they will see Him as He is, and rejoice in His light and love throughout eternity. Though painfully feeling how far we come short in our endeavour to do justice to this subject, we must bring this Introduction to a conclusion, humbly invoking for it and the following Commentary the protection and blessing of the God of truth, who is light and love.

ALGIERS, *5th April* 1858.

THE SONG OF SOLOMON.

PART I.

SCENE—ISRAEL'S CAMP AT THE FOOT OF MOUNT SINAI.

ARGUMENT OF CHAP I.

(V. 1.) Title. (Vv. 2, 3.) The repenting Church, after her great sin (that of the golden calf) supplicates the Covenant Angel for pardon, for the renewal of His gracious manifestations unto her; and that He would come again and dwell in the midst of her in His cloud. (V. 4.) She prays that the order for the building of His sanctuary—the execution of which was interrupted by that sad event—might be renewed, the tabernacle built, the Lord come to dwell in the Most Holy Place between the Cherubim, and that she might then enter His chambers with sacrifices of joy. (Vv. 5, 6.) The Church, under the metaphorical name of *daughter of Zion*, explains to the other nations, who pass under the metaphorical name of *daughters of Jerusalem*, the reason of her courage and boldness in addressing such various and large demands unto her Bridegroom, whom she had so grievously offended. (V. 7.) She asks her Lord how, and by what means, He intended to lead her safely through the wilderness, and procure her rest in the land of promise—thus betraying her unbelief and fears in the midst of her protestations of love and perfect confidence. (Vv. 8—11.) The Lord, in tender, sweet, and, at the same time, severe terms, reproves the bride for her want of faith, and then answers her by telling her that He knew all her wants better than herself, and that He would supply them in His own way. (V. 12.) The bride's deep repentance and acknowledgment of the justice of the rebuke. (Vv. 13, 14.) The consolations which she finds in the renewal of the order for the building of the tabernacle, and the Lord's renewed promise to come and dwell between the Cherubim. (Ver. 15.) The Lord's gracious approval of her state of mind and confession. (Vv. 16, 17.) The bride's return of compliments and rejoicings.

1. The Song of songs, which is concerning Solomon.

Every biblical student knows the purport of this superlative term in the Hebrew language—מֶלֶךְ מְלָכִים (Melech Melachim) means "King of kings," *i.e.*, the most potent

of Kings, the ruler over them; and is usually applied to Jehovah as King of kings; *adoney haadonim*, "Lord of lords;" *Elohey haelohim*, "God of gods." So *Kodesh kadashim*, "Holy of holies," i.e., "most holy, or highest degree of holiness." The same שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים (Shir hashirim) "the Song of songs," must signify the most important, the most excellent, and most precious of songs. The question to be solved is, In what point of view is this supreme excellence ascribed to that song? It is most improbable that Solomon employed such a pompous and singular superscription merely to denote the excellency of his own composition and the beauty of its diction. It is repugnant to common sense to suppose for a moment that the princely, nay, the inspired author, would introduce his own work as surpassing all others in elegance and beauty of diction. Besides, the least acquaintance with the Hebrew language is sufficient to convince any one that many a chapter in Solomon's Proverbs excels this song in regard to mere eloquence of style, compactness of matter, and perhaps also in regard to the choice of figures. For instance, one glance at the poetical magnificence and attractive splendour exhibited in the eighth and ninth chapters of his Proverbs compels one to conclude that, were Solomon's thousand and five songs now extant, many of them would surpass this song in beauty of language and poetical imagery, as these chapters certainly do. Our argument will be stronger still if we suppose that Solomon extolled this song, for mere poetical skill, not only above all others of his own composition, but even above all sacred songs then known in Israel. That the title implies this we shall hereafter see. Could the wisest of men, the most illustrious of monarchs, and, next to Isaiah, the prince of sacred poets, commit such a blunder as to praise himself for the composition of a song, which, in mere point of diction, surely does not excel the two splendid songs of Moses! But suppose it did so, certainly Solomon had more regard and veneration for that servant of God and father of prophets, and most illustrious of men, and valued his writings and his songs more highly, than to allow in himself the very thought of claiming supreme excellence for his own composition.

The only way, therefore, of explaining and justifying the title of the song is to suppose that it refers to the all-impor-

tant subject which this Song allegorically treats of. In this respect alone it is the most precious of all other songs, whether composed by Moses or any other prophet, or even by Solomon himself; for it celebrates the everlasting love of the "King of kings," of the Creator and Saviour of the world, to His Church in past, present, and future ages. And it is only when so understood, and when thus applied, that even the figures employed become rich and splendid, and pregnant with precious realities—it is then that the Song is seen to be magnificent in expression, most important in doctrine, example, and promise. It is then, that not Solomon but the Holy Spirit claims for it the title of the most excellent and the most holy of songs, and justly too; for it reveals mysteries of Divine love, into which "the angels desire to look"—mysteries which "from the beginning of the world have been hid in God"—mysteries which were still surrounded, in some degree, with clouds of obscurity when delivered to the prophets of old, but which are now clear as light to us in Jesus Christ, whose "testimony is the spirit of prophecy." It is the Song of songs; for while all other sacred songs refer to particular times, celebrate partial deliverances of God's children by the Angel of the Covenant, or sing of a single manifestation of His love towards them, this Song celebrates Jehovah's redeeming love towards His Church in general. It begins with the period when the Angel of the Lord's Presence dwelt invisibly in the pillar of cloud, and in the temporary Tabernacle reared for him in the wilderness. It treats of the happy time when His glory abode between the Cherubim in the magnificent sanctuary built for Him by Solomon His type, and ends with the period when the promised Messiah, manifested in the flesh, came suddenly into His temple, and, after having accomplished His eternal plan of Redemption, returned as an everlasting High Priest to the throne and into the bosom of His Father, to be "a Minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man." Yes, this holiest of songs contains the sum and substance of what the Holy Spirit was pleased to reveal to those of old regarding the inexpressible love of God, and His salvation by Jesus Christ; "of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently . . . searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Chris'

that was in them did signify, when he testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.”*

The next part of the title reads—אַשֶׁר לִשְׁלֹמֹה (Asher Lishlomoh with the rel. pron. and particle לְ). We have no reason whatever to doubt that Solomon was the author of the Song, nevertheless we cannot admit that his name was used here merely to indicate his authorship. As we shall see that, wherever his name occurs throughout the Song, it is employed figuratively, and that the real Bridegroom, the Covenant Angel, is always the reality and substance, while Solomon is the mere type or shadow; so in the title Solomon is only the type, while the reality is the Holy Personage to whom, and to whose Body, the Church, this Song is dedicated.

Psalms lxxii. bears likewise the title *Lishlomo*, i.e., “to Solomon,” or “regarding,” or “concerning Solomon,” but there, as here, two Solomons, two distinct sons of David, must be understood—the one that was to be the immediate successor to his throne and kingdom on earth; the other, who, according to the Lord’s promise, was to come afterwards out of his loins and inherit the “throne of his father David” for ever and ever, and “to whose kingdom shall be no end.” Thus, while a portion of that Psalm refers to the first Solomon, several passages must refer to the “greater than Solomon,” to the eternal Prince of Peace, as “in his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth” (or “till there be no moon”). . . . “His name shall endure for ever; His name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed.” We cannot be surprised at the fact that David, speaking by the Spirit of God, should have regard to both his descendants at once, when we consider that the promise given to him was of the very same nature, referring at once to Solomon, the builder of the temple made with hands, and to the Messiah, the builder of the spiritual and everlasting temple of God. “He shall build me an house, and I will establish his throne for ever. . . . I will settle him in my house and in my kingdom for ever: and his throne shall be established for evermore.” Nothing can be more evident

* 1 Peter i., 10, 11.

than that Solomon and Messiah are both included here with their respective temporal and spiritual temples, crowns, thrones, and kingdoms. So David understood it; for in his thanksgiving he said, "And yet this was a small thing in thine eyes (*i.e.*, all the promises regarding Solomon), O God; but Thou hast also spoken regarding thy servant's house for a great while to come, and hast regarded me according to the rank of the exalted man, Jehovah God."* No prophecy can be clearer than this, and no doubt can be entertained by any who believe with the Holy Apostles that David by the Holy Spirit spake of Messiah, his promised son, that in the above passage he referred to his second son, to the eternal heir of his throne, to the builder of the Lord's spiritual temple, of whom a prophet spoke afterwards in the following terms: "Thus speaketh the Lord of Hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is *Zemach*, the Branch (or, the Plant); and he shall spring up by himself (or grow up from under himself—*i.e.*, not planted according to nature), and He shall build the temple of the Lord. Even He shall build the temple of the Lord; and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne (*i.e.*, Jehovah's); and He shall be a priest upon His throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between both of them. . . . And they that are far off (the Gentiles) shall come and build in the temple of the Lord." † And of this blessed Plant or Branch spoke David when he said, "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for He (the promised Messiah) is all my salvation, and all my desire though He makes it not yet to grow" (*i.e.*, though the promise of His coming is for a "long while to come.") ‡ Therefore it is that, as these glorious promises made to David regarding Messiah are interwoven and mixed up with those which had immediate reference to Solomon; for with him their fulfilment begun, and with the Messiah their entire accomplishment took place; so David in the above mentioned Psalm adopts the same plan, speaking of the everlasting reign of Messiah his son, in connection with that of Solomon, who was the beginning of the promise, and whom the Holy Spirit chose as a type of the great Prince of Peace. And as in the body of that Psalm David speaks, prays, and

* 1 Chron., xvii., 12—17. † Zech. vi., 12—15.

‡ 2 Sam. xxiii., 5.

prophecies regarding both, so must the title *Lishlomo*, "regarding Solomon," be applied to both.

It is the same with regard to the title of the Song. Solomon was in many respects more nearly related to Christ as a type than even his father. As in his name *Solomon*, and in the peace Israel enjoyed during his reign, he prefigured the Prince of everlasting peace, so he was, by the direct order of God to Nathan the prophet, called *Jedidiah*, "the beloved of God," to prefigure Him who on the Mount of Transfiguration received the testimony of God, saying, "This is my beloved Son;" so he was the type of Messiah in the building of the temple, as we saw above, and in many other points. In these privileges Solomon no doubt rejoiced and gloried as much as his devout father; and as in this Song of songs Messiah and His Church is the grand theme, while he himself figures in it only as a feeble emblem, it is certain that the title must agree with the Song, and mean in the spiritual sense, "The Song of songs, which is concerning (or which is dedicated to) Solomon," *i.e.*, the Messiah, the antitype, the spiritual Solomon, the true and everlasting Prince of Peace, the spiritual Bridegroom of the Song. As for the Hebrew construction of *Asher Lishlomo*, there are many examples of passages in Scripture in which the same relative pron. *Asher* occurs, along with the particle \beth preceding and succeeding a noun, and where they signify "which is devoted for," or "delivered to," and not "which belongeth to." Jer. xv. 2 alone presents four examples; 1 Chron. xxix. 2 offers five examples with the particle \beth alone, and many similar instances can be furnished. So we find a Psalm of David delivered to Jeduthun the chief musician to be used in the temple, and entitled *Lijeduthun*, "for Jeduthun, a Psalm of David," where the particle \beth must signify "for," and not as belonging to, or composed by; for it is distinctly said that it was composed by David. "But it may be observed farther, that none of Solomon's usual titles are added, as in the Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, where he is called "Son of David, King of Israel, and King of Jerusalem." If any reason is to be assigned for this omission, this seems the most probable, that he wholly forgot those titles which refer only to his temporal estate, greatness, and dignity, when rapt in contemplation of that celestial Prince, the Prince of Peace, in comparison with

whom all others are unworthy to be named; and whose character was best expressed by the name of "Solomon" alone, He being the great Peace-maker and Reconciler of God and man. (Bp. Patrick.)

THE CHURCH.

2. Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth ;
For thy love is more pleasant than wine.
3. Besides the savour of thy precious ointments
Like ointment diffused is thy name,
Therefore do the virgins love thee.*

With regard to the spiritual sense of these two verses (the more especially verse 2) the author above quoted has left nothing to be desired, we therefore begin the exposition with an extract from his forcible observations. "With the thoughts of whom, his mind being fully possessed, he burst forth into this most passionate strain of affection to Him, saying in the name of them all" (*i.e.*, of the whole Church) "O that He would come and speak to us by Himself, and not merely by His prophets; who have told us so much of Him that I cannot but wish to converse familiarly with Him, and receive the words of His own mouth (those words of grace, Ps. xlv. 2, which will ravish all men's hearts), and

* לְרֵיחַ (Lereach) "Besides (or in addition to) the savour," &c.

This is one of the many significations of the particle לְ. Thus Exod. xiv. 28: "And the waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen לְכֹל (Lechol), in addition to (or besides) all the hosts of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them." The same Lev. xi. 26. לְכֹל (Lechol) "Besides all," (or "in addition to all")—Lev. xvi. 16, 21; Is. xxviii. 10. 13. In one verse the particle לְ stands in place of מִלְבַּד (Milvad), as in 1 Kings x. 13; or in place of עַל (al) in Ezek. xvi. 37. To render it "because" would do violence to the text as well as to the sense; for then the reputation of the Bridegroom's name would be made to depend wholly on the savour of his ointments! while it is the contrary that the Bride declares. שֵׁמֶן הַיֵּרֶק שָׁמֵדָה (Shemen turak shemecha), mark that the verb "turak" ("diffused") is so placed as to be equivocal, and therefore equally serves both nouns between which it stands. We have followed the sacred author's arrangement, rendering it literally, and putting the word "diffused" between the two nouns "ointment" and "name," that it may refer to both alike, and signify that like diffused oil so is his name diffused; *i.e.*, famous and spoken of with admiration everywhere.

all other expressions of His incomparable love : which is to be preferred infinitely before the most precious pleasures yea, before the very sacrifices, and the wine that is poured out upon the altar unto God. (Bp. Patrick's Paraphrases.) Again, in his annotations the same author remarks : "Let Him kiss me—Solomon speaks this in the person of the virgin daughter of Zion ; that is the Church, whom he here introduces in the most passionate strain, wishing for some token of love, which is expressed under the metaphor of a kiss. But there is no mention at all made of the name, condition, or beauty of the person whose love is desired, nor any account given of the beginning or progress of this desire ; but he makes her burst out in a sudden, and abruptly into these words, *Let Him kiss me, &c.*, that he might the more artificially describe the nature and force of divine love ; which, when it possesses the mind, snatches it so from itself that it is wholly in Him that it loves. It thinks of nothing else, seeks nothing, wishes nothing, speaks of nothing but this alone ; and imagines that everybody else thinks of the same, and knows of whom it speaks." In this quotation we have a fair specimen of the spiritual interpretation of this Song as it has always been understood and explained by the children of God, who have rightly considered it as celebrating in a superlative manner the love of God to his Church. But as we proceed farther in it, we shall see into how many great difficulties and inexplicable enigmas even such enlightened and spiritually minded authors as that quoted above, were led, by their not having searched into the particular periods, and various events and circumstances of the Church, to which its different portions evidently refer. The very facts which this author himself notices, clearly prove the necessity of such an application. The fact that "there is no mention made at all of the name, condition, or beauty of the person whose love is desired ; nor any account given of the beginning or progress of that desire," is so strange, so unnatural, and so inexplicable, that it speaks plainly enough of a certain period, and of well known events in the Church of God, to which this passage must refer. The fact of an "abrupt and sudden outburst" of the Bride in words like these : "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth," words which, though the author very judiciously

paraphrases as to their spiritual meaning, are still very harsh and unnatural even for figurative language (which must always be probable, and in accordance with custom and decorum, however peculiar in nature and circumstances), clearly indicates that some relation of affection and of mutual declarations of love must have already existed between them, otherwise Solomon would most certainly have opened with the Bridegroom's proposals to the Bride, and with his protestations of love and affection to her, in such terms as to justify her confidence and her outbreak in such a passionate strain. We say that these facts fully prove that unless we find out that period, and those events, and the peculiar relation of the Church to Her divine Master, we can neither understand her petitions and motives, nor his answers, and many of the sublimest passages in this "Song of songs" must in consequence remain obscure and unintelligible. To do this, to trace the peculiar situation and condition of the Church at the period to which the first chapter refers, must therefore form the first step on entering upon the exposition of it.

The God of Abraham, according to his gracious promises made to that eminent Patriarch, sent his Angel to Moses at Mount Horeb, and engaged him to bring forth the people of Israel out of Egypt by an outstretched arm, by signs and wonders such as were never seen or heard of before among any nation, and to bring them to that very mountain of God, that he might there enter with them into a solemn and everlasting covenant. Why all this was done the Lord declared to them by the same Moses, saying, "For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God; the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people; but because the Lord loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh, King of Egypt. Know, therefore, that the Lord thy God, he is the God, the faithful God, who keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments, to a

thousand generations."* Here, then, was the declaration of sincere, disinterested, and divine love on the part of the Covenant Angel, who, in Solomon's Song, is represented under the metaphor of a Bridegroom; and this declaration, though repeated in the book of Deuteronomy, was made to Israel as a Church at the outset, even in Egypt, when as yet in the most degraded state of slavery and in a deplorable depth of ignorance. But Israel was then not only insensible in regard to the infinite value of that declaration of Covenant love, but even entirely ignorant of the character and divine majesty of him that made it to them. It was only after the many mighty miracles which the Lord wrought by the hand of Moses in Egypt and at the Red Sea, that that people "feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and his servant Moses." But this fear and forced faith was far from producing reciprocal love. It was a slavish fear, originated by the conviction that the "God who brought them out of Egypt, hath as it were the strength of an unicorn (in the language of the heathen prophet); he shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows"†—that he excelled in strength all the gods of Egypt whom he overthrew, and that he can command the elements to execute his wrath upon his adversaries. Nor did all the glorious scenes of Mount Sinai expel that slavish fear and make way in their hearts for love; for "when the people saw the thunders and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking . . . they removed and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die."‡ Here we have a most striking instance of loveless fear (if we may use this expression), and so to this day, while the believing and loving child of God says with David, "God is our refuge and strength, . . . therefore will not we fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea," the child of fear without love, though believing in the existence, omnipotence, and majesty of God, trembles like a leaf at the voice of the Almighty in the peals of thunder and in the flashes of lightnings, lest he die, for the Lord is too

* Deut. vii. 6—9.

+ Num. xxiv. 8.

‡ Exod. xx. 18, 19.

mighty (as it were), for his feeble faith! Such was Israel at the time of the glorious display of divine majesty and splendour on the Mount. All that the ignorant and inexperienced Bride had hitherto learned of the character of the heavenly Bridegroom was his awful omnipotence, his matchless strength, and the terribleness of his thunder-words, but she had no idea of beholding in these mighty manifestations his condescending love and divine affection towards her. Therefore, instead of being moved to reciprocal love and to filial confidence, she was horror struck when hearing His voice out of the thick clouds and flames of fire, announcing to her his conditions in the ten commandments. So much so, that she intreated Moses to be the medium between her and her God, and that God should no more speak directly unto her.

The consequences of this slavish fear without filial love soon manifested themselves in a most deplorable manner. Moses their interpreter went up to the Mount into the cloud where the glory of the Lord resided, and where, in confirmation of his Covenant promises, he breathed nothing but love towards his redeemed people, saying unto him, "Let them make a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them." While Moses was receiving instruction how to make that sanctuary and all its utensils according to the pattern shown to him, and was waiting to receive the tables of the law from the hand of God, Israel, destitute of love in their hearts to bind them with the bond of grateful affection to their God, having been left forty days without their interpreter, and without any new manifestations from God of a nature to keep alive their feelings of awe and fear, became impatient, and being without real faith in an invisible Deity, resolved to invite again their old friend Apis in the shape of a golden calf, before which they danced and rejoiced as before a god whose presence, while it does not inspire love, neither strikes with terror. Moses soon after came down from the Mount with cheering messages, and most glorious promises in his mouth, and with the tables of the law in his hands. The latter he cast from him and broke in pieces as soon as he saw the idol in the midst of the camp, and the former he changed into severe rebukes and heavy judgments.

Deep repentance always follows deep conviction of a great

crime; and such was the case with Israel on that occasion. Among the many severe rebukes which Moses must have administered to them for their degrading attachment to the Egyptian abominations, he must have laid before their eyes all the great and glorious things which the Lord had in store for them, especially that he intended to set up his Sanctuary and dwell in the midst of them; but that they had now forfeited these great favours and privileges by their fearful crimes, and by their want of faith in their Lord and Redeemer, and of gratitude and love to Him. The severest stroke which they received on that occasion, and which seems to have produced the greatest affliction to them, was contained in the following message which the Lord sent them by Moses—"Depart and go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I sware unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will I give it: and I will send an Angel before thee, and I will drive out the Canaanite for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiff-necked people; lest I consume thee in the way."* The purport of this message was that the Lord would no more dwell in the midst of them, and therefore would not have the sanctuary built by them, as proposed to Moses on the Mount—that He would not go with them into the land of Canaan, nor be with them when settled there—that He would only send an Angel before them (mark, no more "the Angel of His Presence," no more the "Angel of the Covenant," which covenant was now broken, but "an Angel;" and not *with them*, but "before them") to drive out the nations and give them the land promised to their fathers, in order that the Lord's *unconditional* promises should be fulfilled, but would consider all the *conditional* promises of the Covenant made with themselves as null and void by reason of their crime. Israel fully understood the terrible weight of this threatening, and they began therefore to lament their sins, and tremble at the consequences of their breach of the covenant, "And when the people heard these evil tidings they mourned, and no man did put on him his ornaments" (verse 4.) This is equal to saying that they dressed in the badge of mourning,

* Exod. xxxiii. 1-3.

as for the death of near relatives. Now, according to the metaphor of bridegroom and bride which Solomon employs in our Song, Israel, on this occasion, might properly be compared to an ignorant and haughty virgin who slights and rejects all the advances and offers of a wise and mighty monarch; and who, though consenting after many great promises and a bright display of his royal magnificence, soon breaks her promise, during a short absence of the prince, and degrades her dignity in seeking another lover among the lowest of society, and who is only brought to her senses when the prince withdraws from her in anger, leaving her time to consider her inconstancy and disgraceful conduct. And when her friends and relatives exhibit to her in lively colours the greatness of her loss, the riches, honour, and happiness which she had deliberately cast away, and the glory and majesty which she trampled under foot, then it is that she begins to shed tears of deep repentance, to bewail her inconstancy and the sad consequences of her light mindedness; and then it is that there is nothing she desires so much, that there is nothing which would so completely restore her to happiness, as a few loving words from the lips of him who with sincere love and affectionate words so often tried to gain her foolish heart, while she repaid him with insulting refusals, unfaithful promises, and degrading behaviour.

Such was the case with Israel at the time and in the circumstances just mentioned; and this was all that the gracious God waited for. All that the sin-pardoning God desired, as the consequences of that sad event, was that Israel, in deep and sincere repentance, should humble themselves in the dust, see and acknowledge their guilt and unworthiness, and plead for forgiveness from their offended God; and that when they had obtained it, their heart should be filled with gratitude and love, of which they were hitherto altogether destitute. To humble them still more effectually, and to stimulate at the same time their love to the Covenant Angel, and make them desire more ardently his presence amongst them, Moses took the tabernacle and pitched it without the camp, afar off from it, and called it the Tabernacle of the Congregation (or, the tent of meeting.) "And it came to pass that every one which sought the Lord went out unto the tabernacle of the

congregation, which was without the camp.”* This was not the tent in which Moses lived with his family, for it remained still within the camp, as will be seen, but it was the tent in which Moses received people *officially*, whether the elders of Israel or their judges, or those who inquired about religious matters, or received religious instructions, or communications made to Moses by the Lord, who appeared there to him before the tabernacle was erected. This he transported far beyond the camp, to show Israel their unworthiness of having the Presence of the Holy God in the midst of them. In the very same verse we are informed that this produced the desired effect, for many Israelites came out to Moses there in order to *seek the Lord* in humble supplications and prayer. But this was not all; for we read farther, “And it came to pass, when Moses went out (*i.e.*, from his family tent) unto the tabernacle, that all the people rose up (in token of deep respect), and stood every one at his tent door, and looked after Moses until he entered the tabernacle. And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the Lord talked with Moses. And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the tabernacle door; and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man at his tent door. And the Lord spake to Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend” (verses 8—11.) So wonderful and extraordinary was the change produced in that people after their deplorable fall. Not only did they lament their sin and its consequences, but they were so much humbled, so mollified, that instead of resenting their severe punishment, instead of murmuring at the signs of the Lord’s displeasure, they quietly and patiently submitted, and acknowledged their punishments as just. Seeing that the Lord did not count them worthy to abide in the midst of them, or even to appear unto Moses in the midst of their camp, they watched with great ardour the time when Moses left it to go to the temporary tabernacle to meet there their offended God. First they all rose up, out of respect to Moses, and stood in silent awe all the while he passed through the ranges of their tents, even until he reached the tabernacle. When they

* Exod. xxxiii. 7.

saw the Angel of the Covenant descending in a cloud, and speak to Moses, they rose again, and then fell on their faces and worshipped him; yea they went in great numbers to the tabernacle to "seek the Lord," to hear gracious words of him at whose voice they were terrified at Mount Sinai; for fear had now given place to love—still, however, imperfect. The ardent desire to regain his favour, and not to lose his glorious presence from the midst of them, made them forget all the terrors with which his voice inspired them once, at the burning and smoking mountain.

It is to that period, and to this event, that Solomon refers in the opening of his Song of songs. It was in this burning fervour of their souls, in this devout disposition of their hearts, that Israel left their tents and their camp, and ran towards the temporary tabernacle; and presenting themselves first to Moses, their typical Mediator and their sole interpreter, fell on their faces and vehemently exclaimed, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth." "O Moses our shepherd, we come to seek our God: Intercede for us, plead with the blessed but justly provoked Angel of our Covenant for us, that he would graciously pardon the great offence we have committed: O let him exercise mercy and divine compassion towards us: Let him pronounce a free pardon for all our sins, and let him for ever forget all our iniquities: Let him by his own mouth speak words of grace and consolation to us: Let him once more come and abide in the midst of us; and 'let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.'"^{*} But in the midst of this strain of ardent supplication they remember that they are equally in the presence of their God whom they seek, as in that of Moses, and therefore they suddenly change their address from the third to the second person, telling God himself the reason of their assiduous supplications and eager desire: "For thy love is more pleasant than wine." "We crave thy pardon and a renewed declaration of thy love towards us, for we have now learned to value thy love as well as to love thee: We have seen thy long-suffering towards us at a time when we deserved to be rejected for ever, to be cut off by reason of our great transgression." If this is thy way even in time of our offence, if "Thou, Lord,

^{*} Ps. xc. 17.

art good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call thee,"* even after such a sin, what must be thy love! Surely thy love must be better than all temporal blessings: "Thy loving-kindness is better than life."† Therefore, "Thy words are sweeter than honey to my mouth;"‡ therefore we pray—"Turn us again, O Lord God of Hosts; cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved."§

But the revived Church, the repenting Bride, continues to give the reasons not only for her repentance and prayers, but also for her ardent love to Him at whose feet she humbles herself: "Besides (or, in addition to) the savour of thy precious ointments, like ointment diffused (*i.e.*, like the odour of ointment) is thy name; therefore do the virgins love thee." "The reason of our ardent desire to have thee in the midst of us, to hear thy blessed and gracious words addressed to us, and to receive a special token of thy favour and love towards us, is not only because Moses informed us that thou our King and Redeemer wast 'anointed by God thy God with the oil of gladness above all thy fellows'||—that thou hast been exalted above angel and seraph to be Messiah, the anointed Saviour of the world—not only because he has informed us of the precious and holy ointments which he was ordered on the Mount to prepare for the anointing and sanctifying of the ordered sanctuary where thou art to dwell in thy glory,¶ but because thy glorious name has already spread with far more rapidity and splendour than odours diffused from the best of spices and perfumes. The wonders thou hast wrought in Egypt for us have made thy name to be exalted above the names of all other gods. Thou hast divided the waters before us to make thee an everlasting name. So didst thou lead thy people, to make Thyself a glorious name."** Yea it is because "God also has highly exalted thee, and given thee a name above every name," that the virgin souls love thee; even those inexperienced souls who, though for a moment in their ignorance they forgot themselves, and sought other gods to rule over them, have now deeply and sincerely repented of their errors, and now desire with heart and soul to deliver

* Ps. lxxxvi. 5. † Ps. lxiii. 3. ‡ Ps. cxix. 103. § Ps. lxxx. 19.
 Ps. xlv. 7. ¶ Exod. xxx. 22—38. ** Is. lxiii. 14—19.

themselves as free-will offerings wholly unto thee, to make mention of thy holy name alone ; to praise thy name alone ; “ for thy name alone is excellent.”*

When Moses, the faithful and tender guide of Israel, saw that the erring flock was so far restored to humility, repentance, prayer, and love, and knowing that the God of Abraham was rich in pardoning grace, and that He must be well pleased with the change that had taken place in their hearts, he thought the occasion favourable for addressing himself to the Lord on their behalf, to obtain the full pardon of their sin, and His glorious presence among them. “ And Moses said unto the Lord, See thou sayest unto me, bring up this people, and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me (as the Lord only said, ‘ an angel will I send before thee,’ but Moses knew not the character of that angel), yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight. Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, show me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may (really) find grace in thy sight, and consider that this nation is thy people”† That this petition was not a personal one, but made in the name of the whole nation, is evident—1st, because the promise was made to the whole nation to know them (or to be made known unto them) by name (*i.e.*, by the name “ Jehovah,” which name is in the Messiah—see Exod. vi. 3, 7) ; and 2d, from the last phrase, “ consider that this nation is thy people,” which Moses opposed to what the Lord said to him in verse 1—“ thou and the people which *thou* hast brought up out of the land of Egypt”—and which makes it evident that it was in the name of *the nation* that Moses prayed the Lord to make him know his ways, his designs, and future plans regarding them ; if He would graciously permit again the sanctuary to be built, and if He would dwell in it ; and also to let them know by name the angel whom He destined to be with them, and to lead them. “ And the Lord said, my presence shall go and lead thee to rest” (verse 14.) This was clearly indicating that the former threatening was now withdrawn, and that the Lord Himself (in the Angel of his Presence) would now go with them and lead them. But Moses, not having yet fully

* Ps. cxlviii. 13.

† Exod. xxxiii. 12, 13.

perceived the riches of that Divine declaration, and the comprehensiveness of that gracious promise (perhaps because it so suddenly exceeded all his expectations), continued his petition, saying, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence; and wherein shall it otherwise be known that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou shalt go with us? and thus shall we be preferred, I and thy people, from all the nations that are on the face of the earth. And the Lord said unto Moses, even this thing that thou hast spoken will I do, for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name" (verses 15—17.) We know what followed in that ever-glorious, ever-memorable intercourse of the father of prophets with the almighty and only adorable Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts, that Moses, emboldened by the incomprehensible loving-kindness of the gracious God, asked Him to show him his glory, and what he then heard and saw. But as we shall yet have occasion to revert to that wonderful subject, let us only remark now what the power of repentance and penitent prayer is with God! Jacob was met at night near the river Jabok by an angry angel, threatening to destroy him for unfaithfulness in the performance of his solemn vows. No power in the world could rescue him from that peril. All the mighty and best appointed armies of the globe would be easily discomfited and destroyed before that Captain of seraphs by whom all worlds were made; but Isaac's son and Abraham's grandson had a weapon strong enough for that unequal contest—he wept, prayed, supplicated, and prevailed! Not long after the awful conflict had begun, he could say to his Divine and now reconciled adversary, "I will not let thee go unless thou bless me!" So it was with Israel, his descendants, who, only a few days before, were threatened with a sudden and complete destruction, because of their awful sin. Having sincerely repented and humbled themselves before their offended God, and having felt in their souls that the Lord had graciously heard their supplications, they enlarged their petitions, and boldly asked, "Let me know whom thou wilt send with me, make us acquainted with thy mysterious ways, let thy presence go with us, let thy sanctuary be in the midst of us;" or, in the language of our Song—

4. Draw me, we will run after thee.

When the king hath brought me into his chambers,
 We will exult and rejoice in thee;
 We will celebrate thy love more than wine;
 Those who walk uprightly love thee.*

From the remarks we made above, the changes from the singular to the plural, from the third to the second person, and *vice versa*, in the Bride's petitions, are easily understood; for in the passage of Exodus above quoted, the very same occurs, "If thy presence go not with *me*, carry *us* not up hence;" "Is it not in that thou goest with *us*?"—the latter referring to what Moses had asked before, "Show *me* now thy way," viz., because Moses spoke in the name of the people; and in this verse of our Song it is the same as if Moses spoke for the whole Church, and the Church said by him, "Draw *me*, *we* will run after thee"—draw me by thy gracious presence, for when "Thy loving-kindness is before mine eyes, I shall walk in thy truth"†—draw me by thy pardoning love, "He shall restore my soul, he shall lead me in the path of righteousness, for his name's sake,"‡—

* הִבִּיאֵנִי (Heviani.) This word is used here conditionally for the future, as Ps. cxxiv. 3, 4, for the past; בִּלְעֵינִי (Belaunu) "Would have swallowed us;" שֶׁתַּפְּחֵנוּ (Shetaphunu), "Would have drowned us," so here *Heviani Hamelech*, "When the King hath (or shall have) brought us." And probably such is the sense of the passage in Ps. cxxvi. 2, 3, and should be rendered, "Then it was said among the Gentiles, the Lord hath done great things for them (*i.e.*, for Israel); had the Lord done such great things for us, O how would we have rejoiced!"

נִזְכְּרָה (Naskirah) "We will celebrate," or "commemorate," *i.e.*, with praise and thanksgivings. Whenever that word occurs with reference to the Lord, it does not import a mere remembrance, but with praise, as Ps. xlv. 18, lxxi. 16, lxxvii. 12, &c., &c.

מִשְׁרִיִּם (Mesharim) "Those who walk uprightly." We consider this noun to have the same signification with the name "Jeshurun" given to Israel (Deut. xxxii. 15, xxxiii. 5, 26, Is. xlv. 2), and signifying "the upright nation" (when they merited it.) In the form in which it appears in our verse it often signifies (when in the singular especially) "uprightness," "righteousness," as Ps. xvii. 2, lviii. 1, xcvi. 7. But as יֵשָׁרִים (Yesharim) means "upright men," so we may read in our verse מֵיֵשָׁרִים (Meyashrim), as in Prov. ix. 16 (notwithstanding of the Rabbies' points), and then it must signify, "Those who become upright or walk uprightly, *i.e.*, who make straight their ways. The same signification it has likely in Ps. xvii. 2, above quoted.

† Ps. xxvi. 3.

‡ Ps. xxiii. 3.

draw me by thy instructions, "Make me to understand the way of thy precepts. . . . I will run in the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt have enlarged my heart,"* by granting me wisdom from above—draw me by the fulfilment of thy gracious promises, that thou wilt show thy way to the meek and repenting sinners. "Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path."† "Appear therefore, O Lord, in thy power, majesty, and glory, and by thy mighty grace and love attract me and all thy people to thee, which will make the whole world most readily and cheerfully devote themselves unto thy service."—(Bp. Patrick.)

"When the king hath brought me (or shall have brought me) into his chambers." This we consider to be in the conditional mood, and in anticipation of the fulfilment of the Lord's promise regarding the tabernacle, and afterwards the temple, as Moses in his song at the Red Sea already proclaimed, "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established." (Exod. xv. 17.) This passage, without doubt, refers primarily to the temple on Mount Zion, a glimpse of which the Holy Spirit gave to the inspired shepherd of Israel; but it may farther refer to the glorious temple above, in the heavenly Jerusalem, though the fulfilment of both began with the building and erection of the portable tabernacle at the foot of Mount Sinai, according to the pattern shown by God unto Moses.‡ And here it is proper to remark, that though both tabernacle and temple were reared by the Church at the command of God, still they are often spoken of as the *sanctuary, temple, habi-*

* Ps. cxix. 27–32.

† Ps. xxvii. 11.

‡ In the same song Moses said, "Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed; thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation." (Exod. xv. 13.) But this must refer to Mount Horeb, where Moses first saw the Lord in the bush, whence Deut. xxxiii. 16, "The good-will of Him that dwelt in the bush." As the Lord in the bush told Moses that when he had brought out Israel from Egypt they should serve the Lord at that mountain (Exod. iii. 12), and as Moses anticipated that the tabernacle should be built, erected, and dedicated unto the Lord there also, and that He would dwell there between the Cherubim; as soon therefore as Israel had passed the Red Sea, and began to approach that holy mountain, Moses, by anticipation and faith, could already say, "Thou hast guided thy people *unto* (mark, not *into*) thy holy habitation," but in our verse Israel still waits and prays to be brought into that holy habitation.

tation, dwelling-place, &c., which Jehovah built for Himself, as in the above passage Moses said, "In the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thyself to dwell in, in the sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established;" so we often hear David and the prophets praying that the Lord would build up Zion (*i.e.*, the temple of Zion) and the walls of Jerusalem. And indeed it was Jehovah himself who built and established both tabernacle and temple, as the Psalmist said, "If the Lord doth not build the house, they that build it labour in vain." For what became of both when the great Architect withdrew His hands from the building of them? And what would they have signified if his glorious presence would not have entered them? And what became of them as soon as He withdrew that favour from them? Or what became of Jerusalem's walls as soon as He ceased to build and keep them? The Church therefore always acknowledged and considered these sacred structures as not only belonging to, but also as being built and established by God Himself. As God, after Israel's great transgression, threatened to withdraw the orders given to Moses about the building of the tabernacle in which He was to dwell in their midst, so, after their repentance, their chief desire was concentrated, and their most ardent supplications directed, towards the recall of that awful threatening, and for the renewal of the order to build that sanctuary. "O that our Divine Redeemer would pity us in his mercy and pardoning love, and order again that sanctuary to be built, and bring me into his holy chambers before the altar, that in time of peace (with him) we might offer unto him peace-offerings, sacrifices of joy, and exult in his salvation; and when we err from his ways, sin-offerings, and appease him by a sweet-smelling savour, mixed with the incense of our prayers, supplications, and thanks-giving." The farther we enter into this Song, the clearer we shall see that Solomon took the past historical events of the Church, as well as those which were future, and which he saw by revelation, and put them in a figurative form, under the leading metaphor of Bridegroom and Bride, and that he often put into their mouths the very sentiments suggested by the Spirit to his father David in the Psalms. We therefore think it most proper to employ the very language of the inspired Psalmist in illustration and explanation of such passages. As for the

petition of the Church, that God in his mercy would draw her by his loving-kindness, and by tokens of his grace, and bring her into his sacred chambers, into his sanctuary, where she would rejoice in him and celebrate his love, is it not the sum and substance of the following passage in David's Psalms?—"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple; for in time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion, in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me upon a rock!"*

"We will celebrate thy love," or, we will commemorate thy love, *i.e.*, when thou shalt give us the opportunity to do so—when thou shalt have brought us into thy sanctuary, and thus enabled us to celebrate thy praises before the altar of sacrifices, to adore thy Divine grace, and make mention with joy of thy loving-kindness towards us. This phrase, along with what the Bride already said about the celebrity of the Bridegroom's name, is also to be found in David's Psalms—"I will worship towards thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy loving-kindness, and for thy truth; for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name," or rather, "for by thy word"—*i.e.*, of promise and revelation in general, but especially by the *Word* that was from the beginning—"thou hast magnified thy name above all."† As she said already that "His love" was more pleasant, more cheering, more refreshing than wine, so she adds now that, according to the infinite value of that Divine love above all temporal blessings, so she would celebrate it above all earthly possessions, enjoyments, and happiness; and with more solemn cheerfulness than that with which the wine and oil was poured on the altar of sacrifices, would pour her praises and loud songs of adoration into the bosom of her loving God and Redeemer.

To complete her vow, and give more strength to her promise, that when the Lord had brought her into his sanctuary, she would rejoice and exult in him, and praise and adore his love continually, she adds, "Those who walk uprightly (or those who become upright) love thee." As if she had said, "And how could I act otherwise towards a

* Ps. xxvii. 4, 5.

† Ps. cxxxviii. 2.

God who so much deserves my love and gratitude? How could I commit such a sacrilege as to remain silent or indifferent to the mercy and grace shown unto me, unworthy sinner, by such an holy and almighty God? How could I refrain from praising thee in the midst of great congregations, and say, 'Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous, for praise is comely for the upright. . . . For upright is the word (or promise) of the Lord, and all his works are done in faithfulness.'* 'O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together.'† 'For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; the upright shall behold his countenance.'‡ Therefore, 'I will praise the Lord with my whole heart in the assembly of the upright and in the congregation.'§ 'Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name, the upright shall dwell in thy presence.'|| Now, in concluding our observations on this verse, we invite the reader to compare again its sentiments with the following passage:—"How precious is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house, and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life; in thy light we shall see light. O continue thy loving-kindness unto them that know thee; and thy righteousness to the upright in heart."¶

5. I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem ;
As the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon.
6. Look not at me, because I am swarthy ;
For the sun had glanced upon me :
My mother's sons were incensed against me ;
They made me keeper of the vineyards,
Thus my own vineyard I did not keep.

If verse 5 be construed according to its sentiment, it will read, "O ye daughters of Jerusalem, though I am black as the tents of Kedar, I am comely as the curtains (or tapestries) of Solomon." In the midst of Israel's protestations of love and devotion to her pardoning God, in the midst of her supplications for renewed manifestations of the Divine pre-

* Ps. xxxiii. 1, 4. † Ps. xxxiv. 3. ‡ Ps. xi. 7. § Ps. cxi. 1.
|| Ps. cxl. 13. ¶ Ps. xxxvi. 7-10.

sence, promise, and favour, she remembers her recent transgression, her awful crime in a moment of forgetfulness, in having forsaken her God and returned to Egypt in her heart, by imitating and worshipping one of her idols, and her heart is like to break and her courage to droop. But she soon remembers also her sincere repentance, her earnest resolution, to remain henceforth faithfully attached to her God, who had shown her on that occasion so much long-suffering and tender mercy, especially when Moses reminded him of his oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Solomon, therefore, makes her now appear on the scene as if she was surrounded by all other nations, staring at her with great surprise, gazing with astonishment at her boldness, in addressing such weighty petitions to an offended God—in making so great requests immediately after go great an offence. The Bride, seeing the nations looking at her with such surprise, says, “‘I am black.’ It is true the awful sin I have committed is the blackest that could be committed against such an almighty and loving God; but still ‘I am comely’ in His sight, for the sake of my fathers, the patriarchs, and His oath to them—for the sake of my deep repentance, which, when accepted in the covenant-angel, the blackest of sinners is washed white in the sight of God, who delights in mercy, and has no pleasure in the death of the sinner, and whose wrath and righteous indignation are disarmed, and turned into grace and compassion at a single tear, sincerely shed by a broken-hearted penitent, so much so, that were I even as black in sin and iniquity as the skin coverings of Kedar’s tents, my repentance, his pardoning love in the Redeemer, and his gracious promises made to my fathers, make me appear in his sight as comely and beautiful as the magnificent curtains in Solomon’s palaces, with their embroidered purple flowers upon a snow-white ground.” In verse 6, she continues to give to the astonished nations the reason of her degeneracy, and tells them how she had lost her former beauty, and had thus become black, viz., that she had been led to forget the pure worship of the God of her fathers, and to become attached to the dumb idols of the Egyptian abominations, saying, “Look not at me because I am swarthy” (or “black coloured,”) *i.e.*, Look not at me with astonishment, that I, the descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the patriarchs

of Canaan, should commit a sin of such Egyptian blackness ; but remember how “ the sun did glance at me ” (or gaze upon me), remember the scorching heat of my afflictions, of my bitter slavery in Egypt, and my degradation there for several centuries—remember how these cruel and unnatural “ sons of my mother ” (born of another father, Ham) “ were incensed against me,” (because of Noah’s curse upon them, and his blessing to Shem), and treated me in a most cruel and merciless manner—how “ they made me keeper of the vineyards,” how they forced me to submit to every hard and degrading labour, and to the worship of their abominable idols. “ Thus my own vineyard I did not keep.” This is the reason that I entirely forgot the worship and love of the God of Abraham, and degenerated into idolatrous habits. Thus it was that when Moses absented himself for forty days, and I saw nothing of him, or of the God newly revealed unto me as the God of my fathers, I relapsed to my old habit of seeing the God I worship, and in my corrupted heart returned to the Egyptian idols. The more ardent, therefore, is now my supplication that this blessed, sin-forgiving, and loving God of Abraham’s covenant should now guide me by his almighty presence, and draw me after Him with the bands of love, that I may now follow Him continually, and cleave to Him for ever.

Now, it is right to observe, that as Solomon in this Song follows the short sketch traced out by his father David in Ps. xlv., he must also mean by the Bride the Hebrew Church, the virgin daughter of Zion, and by the “ maidens her companions,” the Gentile nations, who were, under the Messiah, to be joined to the Bride, and espoused to the same Bridegroom, and in their turn to become the living Church of God. So the 14th verse of that Psalm, if literally rendered, reads thus :—“ Virgins in rich attire shall she lead to the king,”* *i.e.*, the ancient Church was destined to make known Messiah’s name among the Gentile nations, and espouse them to her own Bridegroom ; and this was done when the first Christians of the Church at Jerusalem sent forth apostles and evangelists to preach Christ among the nations, and teach them how to present themselves as pure and undefiled virgins to Him who, in everlasting love, died for them on

* See Translation and Exposition of the Psalms, by the Author.

the cross, and rose again for their justification. It was that ancient and old covenant Bride that said to the converted Gentiles, by her delegate the apostle Paul, "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy, for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." (2 Cor. xi. 2.) "After her, her companions shall be brought unto thee," *i.e.*, after having accomplished her mission, and ceased from being the only peculiar Church and nation, as well as from the office of apostle and preacher, which things passed over to the general Christian Church, composed of believers of all nations and tongues; other nations—no longer however by her instrumentality, for she was lost in the Gentile Church, but by the usual order of things—other nations of her ancient companions were brought to Christ, other of the surrounding nations who once stood afar off, and looked at Israel as the only favoured and beloved Bride, were now brought likewise to the king with joy and exultation, and became the beloved of Him who was promised as a "light to enlighten the Gentiles." Therefore did Solomon represent Israel in the above passage, surrounded by the Gentile nations, as a bride by her companions; and while they were astonished at the boldness and glowing language with which, after so great a sin, she dared to address her offended Bridegroom, and at her enormous demands, she is made to give the above explanation, showing them that in the "Lord God she hath righteousness and strength"—that though her sins were "red like crimson, she may become white like snow"—that "the Lord is good, ready to forgive, and rich in mercy," for He has prepared means by which He can "forgive all her iniquities, and heal all her diseases," and crown even the greatest of sinners "with loving kindness and tender mercies, . . . for he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust." (Ps. ciii.) Having thus declared unto all nations the ground of her hope, the source of her courage, and the reason of the confidence with which she makes such bold requests after so flagrant a transgression, she turns again towards her *still silent* Bridegroom to renew and continue her petition. But unfortunately, in concluding her petition, she betrays her imperfection, inexperience, and want of faith, for which she is justly reprimanded, as will be seen.

7. Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth,
 How wilt thou feed *thy flock*?*
 How wilt thou make it to rest at noon?
 For why should I be as a veiled woman
 By the flocks of thy companions?

She who had hitherto been ill-treated, and cruelly oppressed by her mother's sons, the Egyptians, and forced to neglect and abandon her own vineyard, by being reduced to slavery, to hard labour, and idol worship, was now redeemed and liberated by the mighty arm of her beloved, and not only adopted by him as his inheritance, and as the "flock of his pasture," but as a Church she was now charged to feed in her turn the young sheep of the flock, for and under the great Shepherd, to whom they both belonged. That the Church of God is represented in Scripture language under both the emblems of *flock* and *shepherd* at the same time, numerous passages prove. The following are a specimen:—"And we who are thy people, and sheep of thy pasture."† "My people hath been lost sheep, their shepherds have caused them to go astray."‡ Here the Church is *shepherd* and *sheep* at the same time. Again, "Woe to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks?"§ "And ye are my flock, the flock of my pasture."|| Our Saviour, in the tenth chapter of John, declares himself to be the Shepherd of his flock, the Church; and therefore he said to his apostles, "I send you forth as sheep into the midst of wolves;"¶ while these very apostles went forth as shepherds under him, as he said to Peter, "Feed my sheep . . . Feed my lambs." The same Peter said to the elders of the Church, "Feed the flock of God which is among you."** So Paul to the elders of Ephesus, "Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you over-

* אַיְחָא (Aicha) has different significations, as "How? In what manner? To what a degree! How much! Ah how!" See Deut. xviii. 21; 2 Sam. i. 25; 2 Kings vi. 15; Pro. v. 12; Jer. xlviii. 17, &c., &c. It never signifies "Where;" and those who build on 2 Kings vi. 13, would do better to look to the Keri of that word. But the exposition of this verse will show the error of those who changed the "how" into "where." to have been caused by their ignorance of the argument.
 † Ps. lxxix. 13. ‡ Jer. i. 6. § Ezek. xxxiv. 1. || Ezek. xxxiv. 31.
 ¶ Matt. x. 16. ** 1 Pet. v. 2.

seers, to feed the Church of God.”* In this double capacity, under the twofold character of shepherd and flock at the same time, the young and inexperienced Bride, the newly-adopted and tender Church of God in the wilderness, appears in verse 7 in a very doleful light. With feeble faith, and suddenly awakened and yet imperfect love—with a mere spark of zeal, which the slightest wind of temptation could blow out—with a ray of light, which the smallest cloud of sufferings and trials could eclipse—with hope so slender and confidence so weak that the smallest difficulties could dash and destroy them—she set out, courageously in appearance, to run the race, but soon betrays her imperfections in the very midst of her protestations of love and fidelity. After having celebrated the Divine love of her Lord and Redeemer—after having praised and exalted his name and perfections—after having called upon him to draw her with the cords of love, and promised to run after him, and follow him everywhere—after having uttered her ardent desire for his sanctuary, the tabernacle, where she would rejoice and exult in him—yea, and after having declared to the nations the ground of her hope, and the reason of her great confidence in him—she does not finish her eloquent apostrophe without manifesting her weakness and doubts, her groundless fears, and her reprehensible hesitations. Remembering that she was in a desert, where there was neither water nor food, inhabited by nothing but serpents and scorpions, visited by none but roving thieves and desperate Ishmaelites, she ventures to ask her Lord to acquaint her with the means he had provided, with the resources he can command for maintaining her there, in the face of all the enormous difficulties standing like insurmountable barriers before her eyes. “Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, how wilt thou feed thy flock? how wilt thou make it to rest at noon?” *i. e.*, “how wilt thou feed millions of people in a desert like this? how wilt thou provide for them that promised ‘rest,’ seeing this desert is surrounded by mighty and warlike nations, and the moment we would attempt to effect a passage out of it we shall be exposed to fierce and hot battles, more dangerous than the scorching heat of noon-day.”

“For why should I be as a veiled woman (*i. e.*, as a muffled

* Acts xx. 28.

up, persecuted, repulsed and wandering shepherd woman,) by the flocks of thy companions?" In order to understand rightly the sense of this clause, we must first explain the figure which is employed. The shepherds that went far into the interior of the desert to feed their flocks at some rich oasis, always united in companies, in order to relieve the loneliness of the wilderness, to aid each other in case of an attack from wild beasts, and still more to resist the predatory Arabs roving everywhere in search of spoil. These shepherds dispersed with their flocks in the morning, and re-assembled at noon, when the vertical sun was too piercing for the sheep to feed; and at the well of water, where there usually were some trees and shrubs, under which shepherds and sheep could shelter themselves from the scorching heat, the flocks lay down to rest, and the shepherds took their meal, and amused themselves by playing on their flutes, singing their pastorals, telling national tales, &c. When the sun descended a little, and his piercing rays were obstructed by some high mountain summit, the sheep were watered again and led forth to feed (see Gen. xxix. 7). In the evening they re-assembled and made arrangements for the night, for securing their camp against wild beasts and still wilder Arabs. A female shepherd, unless she had some relative, acquaintance, or suitor among the shepherds to protect and aid her, must in such circumstances have been very ill off. In the present day female shepherds are rare among the Muslem Arabs, owing to the retirement in which the females live, and those who follow this occupation feed only on private property, or in inclosed fields where no strangers have a right to come. But in ancient times it was quite common, for unmarried women especially, to feed flocks. We find, for example, that the daughters of Jethro were all shepherds, and that though they were seven in number, they were all driven away from the well by the shepherds, even after they had filled the troughs with water, and that Moses's unexpected arrival enabled them to resist their persecutors, and to water their flocks so speedily, that when they returned to Jethro he asked them, "How is it that ye are come so soon to-day? And they said, An Egyptian delivered us out of the hands of the shepherds" (Exod. ii. 16—19.) From this fact we see, 1st, the great difficulties of female shepherds when without a friend, relative, or suitor among the

shepherds to protect them. By keeping aloof from the shepherds because of their rank, and probably by declining to give encouragement to any of them as suitors, they were exposed to such annoyance and persecution. 2d, That these persecuted eastern women had to stand muffled up (as they always were when exposed to the eyes of strangers), in midst of the shepherds, until they had watered their flocks, and had gone to the pastures, when alone they could water theirs. 3d, That in order to avoid the shame and confusion of thus standing veiled among the insolent and gazing shepherds, these sisters hastened to the well to have their flocks watered before the arrival of their persecutors, but without success, for scarcely had they filled the troughs when the shepherds came and drove them away. Had it not been for the unexpected arrival of Moses, they would have been obliged to wait in the midst of them until the shepherds had all watered their own flocks; and if this was done in the neighbourhood of a town, what must it have been in the desert! If this happened to the daughters of a priest, or, as some will have it, a prince, how must it have fared with perfect strangers! This is the figure employed by Solomon in verse 7, where the Bride is made to ask her Bridegroom if he has provided for her a pasture apart, and how, that she might not be obliged to stand muffled up beside the shepherds and their flocks, exposed to their insults, until they had watered their sheep, and then be forced to give her sheep the troubled waters, and feed them on the already grazed and down-trodden pastures. (See Ezek. xxxiv. 18, 19.) But the real substance of that expression, "for why should I be as a veiled woman by the flocks of thy companions?" seems to mean, "Why should I be as a stranger, a persecuted and despised wanderer, beside other nations, a subject to other princes, a pilgrim and sojourner on their territories, and a tributary to those who would allow me shelter in or near their countries?" It is more than probable that none of the kings residing on the confines of the desert would have refused dwellings and protection to Israel on their territories, but only as vassals and tributaries, not as an independent nation, and this was Israel's fear at that time.

It has already been remarked, that on strict examination and comparison, we discover that Solomon's ideas and sen-

timents in this Song are mostly taken from David's Psalms, though clothed in figures of his own choice, and in language appropriate to the subject; so we find the substance of verse 7 described at large in Ps. lxxviii. 17—20, "And they sinned yet more against him, by provoking the Most High in the wilderness, and they tempted God in their heart, by asking meat for their lust; yea they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? True he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed. Can he give bread also? Can he provide flesh for his people?" And with regard to the nations which the Lord had promised to drive out before them, and their doubts and fears on the subject, we know their conduct on the return of their spies from Canaan, which Moses described in these terms, "And ye murmured in your tents, and said, Because the Lord hated us, he has brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us. Whither shall we go up? our brethren have discouraged our hearts, saying, The people is great and taller than we; the cities are great, and walled up to heaven; and moreover, we have seen the sons of the Anakim there. . . . And in this thing ye did not believe the Lord your God" (Deut. i. 27, 28, 32.) Such was the root of unbelief in the heart of Israel, even at the time of their fairest confessions and strongest protestations of faith, love, and devotedness, and which so frequently manifested itself. In verse 7 of the Song, Solomon took up the deplorable fact, and in a most masterly way makes the Bride's inner thoughts, desires, and doubts pierce through her own words. And we think that Solomon designedly placed that self-accusing petition at the end of her passionate apostrophe, to shew not only Israel's imperfection, but that of the Church of God in general, and of every one of God's children individually; for alas! there is always much of unbelief mingled even with our most sincere confessions, of doubt with our confidence, of fear with our hope, of selfishness with our love, of the world with our heaven, and of time in our eternity. God alone is perfect in all things, and in Jesus alone, the "Captain of our salvation who was made perfect by sufferings," can we be made perfect in the eyes of God.*

* Notwithstanding the frequent relapses of Israel into unbelief, and their outbreaks into open murmurings, and rebellion against God, we

Before we proceed to consider the Bridegroom's answer,

are assured that real awakenings to repentance and faith took place among them from time to time; such as that to which Solomon refers in the first seven verses of his Song. So we read in the above quoted Psalm, "When he slew them (or 'smote them,' *i.e.*, punished them severely for their sins), they returned and inquired early after God. And remembered that God was their Rock, and the High God their Redeemer. Again they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues; for their heart was not right with him; neither were they steadfast in his Covenant. But he being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity and destroyed them not." (Ps. lxxviii. 34-38). Such fluctuations, alas! are common to all the sons of Adam, and it is only by divine compassion and free grace that some of them are enabled to stand unto the end. But he who thinks that Israel individually and as a people were worse than any other nation by nature, or that there was something in Israel's case more extraordinary than in the history of any past or present Christian nation, is greatly in error; and in order to discover his mistake let him only for a moment run his eye over the ruins of the once flourishing Christian nations and Churches, and trace the gloomy history of their fluctuations, declensions, and final destruction. Let him behold with terror the idolatrous millions of the victims of Romanism; the ravages which rationalism and infidelity have made in the German, French, and other Protestant Churches in our day; and let him say with Paul, "If the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation; which at first begun to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will." (Heb. ii. 2-4.) Again: "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more should not we escape if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven." (xii. 25.) Let us likewise keep in mind Israel's real condition, when led during forty years in a dreary wilderness, regarding which Moses himself said, "Who led thee through this great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water." (Deut. viii. 15.) Let us remember what fierce and powerful nations withstood them in their way, and with whom they were compelled to contend, and then let us estimate the faith which they needed in order to pass on calmly, and without dread and doubt; and assuredly we shall have no reason to boast of our own, but rather to tremble. But especially let us hear what He who tries the heart of man, and knows all his thoughts afar off, said with regard to Israel after all their fluctuations, relapses, and murmurings in the wilderness: "Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." (Jer. ii. 2) Such is Jehovah's own testimony to the great measure of faith, love, and confidence which Israel possessed, notwithstanding their frequent doubts and murmurings; and where is now the nation (as a nation) more fit for the task? Solomon therefore feared not that the exposure of the bride's doubts would tarnish her love, seeing the Bridegroom acknowledged her love, "the love of her espousals," notwithstanding her frequent doubts.

beginning with verse 8, we must make some short remarks on the portion already treated. 1st, How clear is it, from the gravity and earnestness of the Bride's address, as contained in the first seven verses, especially from her humble confession, that she was black, as well as from her statement that the Bridegroom, whose love and favour she so ardently desired to procure for herself, was the beloved of all "those that are upright"—that this Song was intended to treat metaphorically of some well known and important event, and of persons whose relation of mutual love and affection was then a well-known and widely-spread fact—and that these persons can possibly be no other than God and His Church; for who are the "upright" but the converted sons of faith! and whom do they love but Him who first loved them! The first seven verses manifestly speak for themselves by referring to the renewed relations between the parties after some alienation and interruption of their relations had taken place, caused by an offence given by one of the parties to the other. The offending party therefore opens the interlocution by confessing her guilt, by a profession of repentance, and an expression of an ardent desire for renewed relations of love and affection, if possible more fervent, more close, and more intimate than ever before; and what event or period in the history of the ancient Church is so evidently referred to as that which we mentioned in the Exposition, seeing that the minutest circumstances recorded in sacred history of that period so exactly agree with the sense and substance of every phrase in the Bride's first apostrophe? 2d, The farther we enter into the Song the more we see how strangely ridiculous are the opinions of those who have pretended to discover in it even the most distant reference to a matrimonial alliance of Solomon with one of his queens! How strange and how absurd is the idea of putting into the mouth of an idolatrous woman the sacred and Scriptural phrase, "Those that are upright love thee!" Think of the humility couched in the phrase, "I am black," and how absurd to thrust that beautiful mantle of the penitent and sin-confessing children of God on the shoulders of a proud and haughty daughter of Apis, Cemosh, or Moloch! But enough will be said of that unhappy blunder throughout the book, and in the notes explanatory of the figures employed. 3d, We observe that

up to this the Bridegroom answered not a word to the various addresses and petitions of the Bride in the first seven verses—and why? Because, as the offended party, he calmly watched her protestations and requests to see if her repentance was sincere, her love perfect, and her confidence complete. But as soon as he heard her last self-accusing petition, which afforded a clear evidence of the imperfection of her love, the weakness of her faith, and of the doubts she still entertained of his being able to fulfil his engagements to her, he instantly took the occasion to reprove and correct her, and to show her that by her own confession she betrayed the imperfection of her love and confidence. This is the reason why, in the next verse, the Bridegroom begins to answer her request in verse 7, and only then proceeds to answer her previous petitions—a thing very remarkable, and not otherwise to be explained.

THE LORD.

8. If thou know not, O thou fairest among women,
Go thou forth in the footsteps of the sheep,
And feed thy kids by the shepherd's tents.

It has been observed already that in verse 7, to which this verse is the answer, the Bride, in the twofold capacity of flock and shepherd at the same time, asked her Beloved two questions, first, How he would feed her in the wilderness? and second, How she would be enabled to feed and procure rest for the young flock committed to her charge, in the face of so many mighty and warlike nations around her deadly enemies? Having thus betrayed her want of confidence in her God and Deliverer, he answered her first question by saying, "If thou know not, O thou fairest among women"—if thou knowest not this, if thou knowest not that he who brought thee out of Egypt by such wonders and signs is the mighty Creator of all worlds, who called all things into existence out of nothing; if thou knowest not that he who divided the Red Sea and made thee to pass on dry ground between its waters standing on each side as walls, and buried beneath it the great army of Pharaoh, is also able to feed thee in this desert, to make thee lie down

in green pastures, to lead thee beside the still waters, to prepare a table before thee in the very presence of thine enemies, and to make thy cup overflow, thou needest yet to learn much before thou hast a right to say to me, "O thou whom my soul loveth;" for how can thy soul love me if thou knowest me not? But if thou knowest not my ways, my faithfulness, and my power to fulfil all my promises, "go thou forth in the footsteps of the sheep,"—go and learn it from those blessed sheep of my pasture who went before thee. "Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way? and walk therein, and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Jer. vi. 16.) "O thou fairest among women," O thou my chosen people whom I preferred to all other nations, if thou knowest not how I feed, protect, and procure rest to my beloved sheep, follow in their footsteps and learn of them. "Be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." (Heb. vi. 12.) Look to Abel, Enoch, and Noah, follow me by faith in their footsteps, and soon thou shalt know me as thy God and friend, even as they knew me. Look to thy father Abraham and follow in his footsteps, who "by faith, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive as an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God. . . . These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth." (Heb. xi. 8—10—13.) Follow therefore in their footsteps, and learn of them, and thou shalt know how I feed my flock, how I protect them everywhere, how I cause them to rest, even in the midst of their greatest dangers, in the midst of their fiercest enemies. But above all, learn of them to seek and desire "that rest that remaineth still for the children of God"—learn to look for the city that hath foundations," and "prepare thyself, O Israel, to meet thy God" in eternity, and then thou shalt be my friend like Abraham, who through faith and patience inherited the promises; and then

shalt thou have a right to say to me, "O thou whom my soul loveth."

But she asked also information and directions how to feed the young flock committed to her charge, and expressed her fears that she would be exposed to the rage and persecutions of the Gentile princes, who would either oppress and enslave her or drive her from place to place. To this she receives a gracious though sharp reply, "Feed thy kids by the shepherd's tents"—that is, that she should feed and direct *her kids*, her unruly and rough children, according to the directions, doctrines, and examples of those whom he would appoint as chief shepherds under him, and who would not only lead and guide herself according to the directions they should receive from above, but also direct her how to feed and train her kids or young flock, that they may become obedient sheep of the Lord's pasture. So we hear David saying, "Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron;"* but still God is called "The Shepherd of Israel, who led Joseph like a flock;"† for the flock is his own inheritance. Moses and Aaron, Joshua and the Judges, the Kings and prophets, were appointed by God as chief shepherds to give his orders to the Church in general; but the Church (in her elders and rulers) has not ceased to be shepherd in her turn. Moses, therefore, appointed seventy elders, judges, and officers over Israel.‡ These were to execute the orders and commandments which he received from above; and being the representatives of the Church and nation, they fed "the kids by the shepherd's tents;" for while they judged and arranged all small matters themselves, all weighty and important affairs they were obliged to bring before Moses.§ In this manner were all the movements of Israel directed in the wilderness, for marching and resting, for peace and war. As God ordered Moses, so did he order the elders and officers, who again made it known to the people. The same order continued under Joshua and those godly elders or judges who were invested with the chief command; and all went on well and prospered. But when they were dead, and Israel ceased to "feed her kids by the shepherd's

* Ps. lxxvii. 20. † Ps. lxxx. 2. ‡ Ex. xviii. 13—27; Num. xi. 16—17.
§ Ex. xviii. 26.

tents," according to the will and directions of the heavenly shepherd, she soon went astray from her God, and became like a "veiled woman" by the flocks of the neighbouring princes, oppressed and enslaved by them, until the Lord raised up another chief shepherd, as in the case of the Judges, to deliver and guide her during his life; but after his death the same misery returned again because of her backslidings. These incessant changes continued for centuries* till the Lord "chose David his servant . . . to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. And he fed them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands."†† We have thus seen the first

* See Judges ii. 18—19; vi. 1—10; viii. 33—35. † Ps. lxxviii. 70—72.

† That order *was* to continue, and, though with some interruption, *did* continue during the entire period of the old alliance; there being always a Moses (a judge, king, or prophet) in the camp, and an Aaron (or high priest) in the sanctuary; until the great and divine Shepherd of the flock appeared—until the blessed Angel of the Covenant came into His temple, then He abolished both these offices of Moses and Aaron, of High Priest and Chief Shepherd on earth, taking away that authority from mortal man and vesting it in Himself. The blessed Jesus alone is now the Chief Shepherd of his flock, in heaven and on earth, as He is the King, Prophet, and High Priest of His Church; for, as Jehovah said to His Son, "Thou art a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek" (Ps. cx. 4), so the Holy Spirit by the same David said of Messiah, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever" (Ps. xlv. 6), and by Jeremiah, "I will raise up unto David a righteous Branch, which shall reign as a King and prosper . . . and this is the name whereby He shall be called, Jehovah our Righteousness" (Jer. xxii. 5, 6); and by Ezekiel, "And I will set up one Shepherd over them, and He shall feed them, even my servant David (*i.e.*, Messiah); He shall feed them, and He shall be their Shepherd" (xxxiv. 23). Not only did the Old Testament prophets foretel the great and happy change in the abolition of chief shepherds on earth, and the investment of the Messiah with that dignity, but they also indicated the reason thereof: "Behold the Lord God will come with one (or 'in one') that is mighty" (comp. Ps. lxxxix. 19, "I have laid help upon One that is mighty"), and His arm shall rule for Him; behold His reward is with Him, and the recompense of His work before Him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently feed those that are with young" (Is. xl. 10—11). In verse 10 we have clearly indicated the reason of that change to be that, whilst under the Old Dispensation these chief shepherds often proved "strangers, mercenaries, thieves, and robbers, whose own the sheep were not, and who came only to steal, to kill, and to destroy," and hence often proved the greatest curse to the under shepherds and to the flock (see Jer. xxiii. 1—7; Ezek. xxxiv.; and comp. with John x. 1—16); therefore the Lord promised to take away that important office from changeable and mortal man, and lay it upon the Redeemer himself, who, having shed His blood and laid down His life for His flock, and received them as the "reward of His labour," as the "recompense of His glorious work," would not

and gentle rebuke administered by the gracious God to his Church, still inexperienced and wavering in faith, whose petitions, interwoven with confessions and protestations of

do as the hirelings did, feed themselves and leave the flock to perish, but would "gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom," as his own inheritance, as the sheep of his pasture, as the reward of his agonies and death. What presumption! what sacrilege! and what horrid rebellion is it therefore in proud and ambitious mortals to attempt to bereave the Saviour of the reward of His bloody sweat and awful agonies in arrogating still that office to themselves! What a curse and destruction such a violent sacrilege must cause to any Church in which it is practised, Rome's ecclesiastical history and her moral ruin sufficiently show. What man can stretch forth his hand against God and prosper? What Church can outrage the privileges which Jesus her head bought for himself with his blood in arrogantly investing His office in one or more of her sinful sons, and not invite shame and destruction upon herself? Jehovah said, "I will lead my flock, and I will cause them to lie down . . . I will set up One Shepherd over them . . . even my servant David (*i.e.*, Messiah), and he shall be their shepherd . . . I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a Prince (or 'Nassi,' *i.e.* 'chief ruler,' as were Moses, Joshua, the Judges, Kings, &c., &c.) among them" (Ezek. xxxiv. 15—23, 24.) Seeing that this was an exclusive promise for the New Testament dispensation; seeing that under the former dispensation Jesus was also the Shepherd of his Church invisibly, though he had appointed chief shepherds on earth, there can therefore be no mistake as to the import of these glorious prophecies, and that the change indicated must be with regard to the abolition of the office of the chief shepherd on earth.

But while the office of chief shepherd was to be abolished under the Gospel dispensation, pastors, not *rulers*, shepherds, not *masters*, were to be appointed; as was foretold, "I will give you pastors according to my heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding" (Jer. iii. 15.) Here it is evident that the New Testament pastors appointed neither by one or many Popes, but by God, are called neither to rule nor to give orders, but to *instruct*, to lead the flock in the way to Zion, to feed the redeemed with the knowledge of their God and his holy will. Again, "I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them (no more devour them), and they shall fear no more (for they will be fed in and with love), nor be dismayed; neither shall they be lacking, saith the Lord" (Jer. xxiii. 4.) As soon, therefore, as Jesus assumed that holy office himself he said to his disciples, "Be ye not called Rabbis . . . Neither be ye called masters; for one is your master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren." (See Matt xxiii. 8—10. Comp. xviii. 1—4. Luke ix. 46, &c.; xxii. 24, &c.) Therefore Peter himself, whom the Divine Shepherd commanded to feed his flock, to feed his lambs, acknowledged that he had not received anything like the Mosaic authority of chief ruler over the flock, or over its pastors. "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder." Mark 1st, that it was not to clerical authorities that Peter addressed his epistle, but directly to the whole flock, elders included. 2d, That he assumed no other authority, either over the flock or its elders, than the authority of mutual Christian love and duty, of instruction and exhortation; for in the Church of Christ there is no mastery, and no superiority, but "all ye are brethren;" for

faith and love, terminated, in verse 7, in words which amounted to this: "True, I love thee with my whole heart, I have entire confidence in thee, and will follow thee whithersoever thou shalt lead me, but I should like just to see thy capital, and the palaces into which thou art to introduce me, and know the means by which thou art to enable me to maintain the rank and title of the consort of

all "like sheep have gone astray," and all by free grace have been restored to the "shepherd and bishop of their souls." Those who have received some talents from the Holy Spirit are in duty bound to apply them in the service of their Master for the edification of His Church. "The elders which are among you I exhort who am also an elder." "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof; not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind. Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief shepherd shall appear ye shall receive a crown of glory which fadeth not away" (1 Peter v. 1—4.) To those to whom this passage is not conclusive and decided enough against hierarchical tyranny in the Church of Christ—to those whose ruling spirit and ungodly ambition leads them to bereave Christ of the office of chief shepherd on earth, and to put themselves violently upon his throne and assume his authority, the awful thirty-fourth chapter of Ezekiel will be read over again before the tribunal of him whose eyes are like the flames of fire, whose exclusive authority they arrogated to themselves, and whose privileges, bought unto himself by his agonies in Gethsemane and on the cross, they trampled under their feet.

Finally, while throughout the Old Testament Scriptures we find that the pastors or under-shepherds were directed to obey a chief shepherd, appointed by the Lord to that office, and while the people were commanded to obey both of them, there are many prophecies foretelling that under the new covenant dispensation the Messiah himself will occupy that office of chief shepherd both on earth and in heaven, and that the pastors under him shall feed the flock according to his exclusive orders and direction, but shall receive none from any mortal man. Accordingly throughout the New Testament, both by Jesus himself and his apostles, the pastors are considered as equals, as brethren among themselves, having no other master but Him who bought both them and the flock with a great price, and receiving no orders but of Him who is the great shepherd and bishop of all redeemed souls. And unto the flock it is said, "Remember those who are your guides (or rulers), who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Again, "Obey those who guide (or direct) you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls as they that must give account (to Jesus the chief shepherd, but not to large or small Popes), that they may do it with joy, and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you" (Heb. xiii. 7—8—17.) As to the assurance and signs of the presence of the chief shepherd and of his continual guidance of his flock, we have His promise, "And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 20.) The Holy Spirit, the Comforter, was promised to come and instruct us in all things, and abide with us for ever. (John xiv. 16, 26.) Where Jesus, therefore, and the Holy Spirit are present, the pastors and under shepherds need no other guides.

such a mighty Prince." In answer she received the double information contained in verse 8—1st, that she must imitate the example of former sheep who lived by faith and not by sight; and 2d, that she must continue to receive her directions by the "shepherds' tents," from Moses and Aaron, Joshua and the Judges, the kings and prophets, till the time appointed arrive when her Lord and Redeemer alone shall be her chief shepherd, and guide her by his immediate directions, and by those of the Holy Spirit. But as this answer referred only to her error in her last petition in verse 7, he now continues to answer her former address.

9. To my horse in Pharaoh's chariot
I compare thee, O my love (or beloved companion.)
10. Thy cheeks are comely with reins,
Thy neck (is comely) with chains.*
11. Reins of gold we will make for thee,†
Beset with studs of silver.

Here we must remember the Bride's former petitions for direct and more full revelations from her God, and that he should draw her, and she would run after him. To this the Lord, after rebuking her want of faith, betrayed in her last petition, answers as follows—"O beloved nation! thou makest fair promises to run after me whenever and wherever I call upon thee, but alas thou wilt run in a wrong direction; thou wilt try to climb the rugged and impassable hills, and to rush down precipices to the danger of thy life, but thou wilt not run in the good and only way. Having no

* תֹּרִים (Torim), properly "conductors, regulators," meaning the laces, leashes, or straps attached (in the Arab bridles), one to the bit, and another to a hoop-like strap which surrounds the chin of the horse above its nostrils, by either of which the Arab leads and regulates his horse to the right or to the left. Ordinarily he leads it by the upper rein, and in case of necessity uses that attached to the bit, to force the animal to obedience. The word is taken from תֹּר (Tor), which (among other significations) means "to teach, instruct, guide, regulate," &c., (Ps. xlv. 4, 2 Sam. xxii. 33, Prov. xii. 26), hence it denotes also "to spy out;" and as a noun, *Torim*, "spies," for after having learned themselves the particulars of the country they spied out, they became the guides of the army. תֹּרִים (Charusim) "chains" attached to the pole or beam of the carriage, and which the horse wears on his neck (see exposition.)

† "We," plural! See exposition of chap. ii. verse 15.

sufficient faith in my ways, and desiring to see everything beforehand with thy dim eyes, and to weigh every step in thy weak mind, thou wilt be terrified to run against the Canaanites when I shall command thee to attack them (Num. xiv. 1—31), and thou wilt run up hill in great haste against them, when I shall say to thee, ‘Go not up, for the Lord is not among you, that ye be not smitten before your enemies,’ and then thou wilt bear the consequences in being discomfited and driven unto Horniah (31—45.) In this ‘I compare thee to my horse* in Pharaoh’s chariots,’ which are full of life, and ever ready to run, but if let loose would run out of the way, and break the chariot to pieces, and destroy themselves. Their best ornaments, therefore, are a bridle and reins, not only to adorn their chins, but to guide and restrain them, and the chains on their necks, by which they in turn direct the chariots they draw.” In other words, this was to teach Israel that their prosperity and safety would not be so much promoted by new revelations, by direct communications from God, and by becoming arbiters of their own conduct when made acquainted beforehand with all the Lord’s plans regarding their future; for, in the language of the prophet, that rough and inexperienced nation was then like “a wild ass, accustomed to the wilderness, snuffing up the wind, according to her pleasure,”† *i.e.*, wild, ungovernable, and unreasonable; but that their safety and prosperity depended entirely on their perfect faith and unreserved confidence in the guidance, and on strict obedience to the orders of the Lord, who knew all their wants and weaknesses, their frequent fluctuations from faith to doubts, from confidence to fear, from humble submission to obstinate rebellion, from melting repentance to the eager pursuit of sin. As long as Israel remained so unsteady and fluctuating, it was not new revelations and manifestations of Divine power, wisdom, and love that they needed; for even if all heaven’s mysteries had been laid open to them, they might soon have rushed into sin, as they did immediately after all the glorious manifestations on Mount Sinai. What they most needed was a deep humility, an unconditional submission, a restraint on all their unruly passions and desires, even on their outbursts

* Coll. noun, for all his cavalry. Solomon had many such horses and chariots (1 Kings x. 26—29.)

† Jer. ii 24.

of devotion and fiery zeal, which, not being supplied by faith, soon passed away, and a readiness to be guided in every step by the Lord's directions, whether they saw their way clearly or not, depending always on him who sees the end from the beginning, and who often leads his children to triumph and honour through clouds of darkness, or by the most intricate paths, when there seems to their own view nothing before them but dangers and ruin.

When the prophet Isaiah makes mention of the loving-kindness of the Lord, and of his great goodness towards the house of Israel, he says, "Then he remembered the days of old, Moses and his people, saying, where is he (the Covenant Angel) that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? Where is he that put his Holy Spirit within them? That led them by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the waters before them to make himself an everlasting name? That led them through the depths as an horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble? As a beast when going down into a valley, so the Spirit of God led them to rest, yea, even so didst thou lead thy people to make thyself a glorious name." (Isa. lxiii. 11—14.) If Isaiah in this passage did not borrow his metaphors and comparisons from Solomon's Song, he at least uses them in the same sense. In it the Angel of the Covenant is spoken of as invisibly leading his flock at the right hand of Moses, the visible chief shepherd. The Lord leads Israel "through the depths" (תְּהוֹמוֹת, *Tehomoth*, is in plural "depths," and not "deep") "as a horse in the wilderness," where there is no road, and many stumbling-blocks, heaps, and chasms, and where, if the horse should not be carefully led by the reins, would run into danger.*

* These *Tehomoth*, or "depths," do not refer to the passage of Israel through the Red Sea, for of this he has already spoken in verse 12; it must therefore refer to the depths, chasms, and ravines in the desert. That the word is also used to denote these chasms and ravines on dry land, especially in deserts, we may see from Ps. lxxi. 20, וּמִתְּהוֹמוֹת הָאֲרֶזֶץ, *Umithomoth Haaretz*, "and from the depths of the earth;" and in Ps. cvi. 9, David compares the depths of the sea to those of the desert—"He also rebuked the Red-Sea, and it was dried up, and he led them through the depths as through the wilderness," *i.e.*, as safe and dry through the depths of the sea as through the chasms and ravines in the wilderness. Again, when speaking of those desert chasms that were filled with the waters of the smitten rock, he says, "He clave the rocks in the wilderness, and made them water the large depths," *i.e.*, flow in

In verse 14, Isaiah again compares their wanderings and guidance in the desert to that of a beast of burden going down a steep hill, which is exposed to great danger in a country without properly formed roads, and especially so in the desert, and which, therefore, requires to be gently and carefully led by the anxious guide, until it comes down into a shady valley, where it is made to rest at a well of water. Even so, saith the prophet, did the Spirit lead Israel to rest. "And they departed from the mount of the Lord, and the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them in the three days' journey, to search out a resting-place for them" (Num. x. 33.) Even thus did the Lord lead Israel gently, and mysteriously, from difficulty to ease, from danger to safety, from fatigue to repose. And so long as they were obedient, and walked according to the directions of the Lord, and in obedience to the gentlest motion of the reins followed the path traced for them by the invisible shepherd, they were secure and happy; but whenever, like an unruly horse, they took the bit between their teeth, and went their own way, they fell into misery and trouble.

In Psalm xxxii. verses 8, 9, David, as an experienced soldier in the fight of faith, gives the following advice to his fellow-sinners, "I will instruct thee and teach thee the way in which thou shouldst go: I will advise thee; for mine eye is upon thee (see Jer. xl. 4, "Come to Babylon and I will set mine eye upon thee," *i.e.*, I will pay attention to thy welfare, and seek to do thee good). Be not without understanding like the horse or mule, whose ornaments are the bit and bridle, to restrain them; let not this be the case with thee.* Here we have another instance of the same metaphor being employed by David, as by Solomon in the Song, and perhaps borrowed by the latter. The prophet Isaiah, announcing the heavy judgments of the Lord upon the wicked nations, and that they would be forced to march into destruction, says, "And a bridle shall be put upon the cheeks of the nations to lead them astray," or more literally, "And a bridle

streams, and fill the holes and ravines of the desert. Thus we see that Isaiah refers to all the wanderings of Israel through the dreary desert, when they were led by God, step by step, as a horse in the wilderness, that they might not stumble.

* See the author's new Translation and Exposition of the Psalms, where this passage is explained in connection with its contents.

leading astray upon the cheeks of the nations," (Isaiah xxx. 28.) Here the common version reads עַל לִפְתָּי (al lechaye) "in the jaws," but this was an invention to suit rather the modern bridle than the ancient text. I have seen Arab bridles made in a primitive style, and which, as was already observed in note pp. 82, have not only the bit and reins attached, which are only used in case of necessity, but also a hoop-like strap round the chin of the animal with two rings, one on each side, into which another rein is introduced, by which the animal is commonly led while the other hangs loose. These bridles and their reins, as well as the saddles of the horses of Arab chiefs, are very richly embroidered with gold, and when on a certain feast which takes place here (in Algiers) in the month of September, Arab chiefs in great numbers and in all their magnificence (which is all displayed in the caparisons of their horses) muster on a certain plain, these gold and silver embroideries glitter most brilliantly in the sun, and dazzle the eyes of the spectators. Hence the figure in verse 11, "Reins of gold (*i.e.* embroidered with gold) we will make for thee, beset (or together) with studs of silver." We have no doubt in affirming that this metaphor shadows forth the law of God with her orders, statutes, precepts, and commandments, of which the same Solomon said, "For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck" (Prov. i. 9.)

Is it asked to what event, admonition, or special dealings of God with his ancient Church Solomon refers, when he makes the Lord give so severe an answer to her requests? We reply, that although it is quite evident to what periods and events the words put into the mouth of the Bride must refer, we must leave more latitude to the answers of the Lord, who knows the future actions as exactly as the present thoughts and dispositions of his Church collectively and individually, and thus Solomon must have cast a retrospective view on all the past dispensations of the Lord in framing the Lord's answer to his inexperienced Church. In the sacred history we find that such were actually all the dealings of the Lord with Israel. He led them continually in intricate and mysterious ways, and when they refused to walk in them, because they did not see whither they would lead them, he pulled the reins and compelled them to walk according to his will. "As I live, saith the Lord God,

surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out will I rule over you."* Whenever Israel shook off the bridle and rushed into error and sin, the Lord corrected and punished them severely and made them walk according to his commands. Hence David saith, "My soul he will restore again; he will lead me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. . . . Thy rod and thy staff, even they shall comfort me."† And again, "And he made his people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock."‡ The following passages also show the same thing:—"If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments, . . . then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes."§ "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes. . . . I have gone astray like a lost sheep, seek thy servant,"|| &c.

But in the very chapters of Exodus in which the events are recorded to which we suppose the first chapter of the Song refers, we find enough to show that the Lord, at the very time he promised pardon to Israel for the great sin they had lately committed, gave them also to understand that he would use severity, that he would restrain, and punish, correct, instruct them, and lead them according to his sovereign will. After their sin, when the Lord, at the intercession of Moses, relented from the severity which had even threatened to destroy them, he still said, "Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee; behold mine angel shall go before thee; nevertheless, in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them" (Exod. xxxii. 34.) And in the 5th verse of the next chapter, he said again unto Israel, "Therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know," or, "and I know," "what to do unto thee." Even in verse 19, when, at the request of Moses, the Lord said, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee," he added, "And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy," *i.e.*, that though the pardon was granted to Israel as a nation, the conditions of salvation were personal, and depended on individual repentance, faith,

* Ezek. xx. 33.

† Ps. xxiii. 3, 4.

‡ Ps. lxxviii. 52.

§ Ps. lxxxix. 30—32.

|| Ps. cxix. 71—176.

good conduct in future, but *entirely* on his sovereign will. And in chap. xxxiv., where the glorious revelations made to Moses about the Covenant Angel are described, and when the Lord proclaimed him as "keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin," he is at the same time spoken of as "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children," *i.e.*, if they are as wicked as their fathers (comp. Exod. xx. 5.) It is thus clear that even after the pardon then granted to Israel, the Lord told them that strict and full obedience to all his commands, or punishments and severe corrections in the case of disobedience, were the conditions of the covenant; and that they must, therefore, yield a passive submission in walking in all the ways in which he ordered them. Hence the figurative language which Solomon employs in making the Lord announce to Israel that he would lead them by a bridle, and direct their steps by reins, so urgently called for by their ignorance of his ways, is fully justified, and most accurately describes the facts and events which it was intended to portray by it, as is evident from the passages which have been quoted. "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, it is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways." (Ps. xcv. 10.)

THE CHURCH.

12. While the king was with his guest,
My spikenard hath yielded all its fragrance.*

* The derivatives of the verb סָבַב (Sav) and סָבַבָּ (Savav) are so numerous, and so varying in their signification, that it often requires the aid of the context to find out the right meaning. So in *Kal.* it means "to turn aside, round, or about," as Gen. xlii. 24, 1 Sam. xviii. 11, Prov. xxvi. 14; in *Niph.* נָסַב (Nasav), fut. יִסַּב (Yisav), and plur. יִסַּבּוּ (Yisabu), "to be turned aside, round, or about," as Num. xxxiv. 4, 5, Jer. vi. 12; and in *Hiph.*, Jer. vi. 11, (see also verses, 3, 4, 7, 14, in all of which it signifies a surrounding, encompassing, or going round about the city walls of Jericho.) It has the same signification in *Pi.*, as 2 Sam. xiv. 20; in *Po.*, as Ps. lix. 7—15; in *Hoph.*, as Ezek. xli. 24, Ps. cxli. 10, and in many other places, in various constructions, but reserving always the original signification. Hence the nouns (often used adverbially) of סָבִיבָּ (Saviv), "the round circle or circumference," as, "But now the Lord my God hath given me rest מִסָּבִיבָּ (Misaviv) from the round about," or, "from all environs," *i.e.*, from all the neighbouring na-

The greater progress an awakened sinner makes in repentance, the more he discovers the enormity of his sins. The clearer he sees the greatness of the plan of salvation, the more he becomes humbled and broken-hearted at every new recollection of his transgressions. Even the prayers he had offered at the throne of grace in the beginning of his new life, when a conviction of his sinfulness caused him to knock at the gate of heaven, appear now to his more experienced and enlightened soul, as so many additional offences committed by ignorance and as so many presumptuous harangues, savouring of unbelief and extravagance, uttered in his childhood. And now that he has acquired a deeper and more accurate knowledge of the wonderful ways of the God of his salvation, he is not only ashamed of the weakness and doubts which even his prayers betrayed when he was newly awakened, but he always returns, with a broken heart and contrite spirit, to the recollection of his former sins and transgressions, and his former ignorance and blind-

tions that dwell round about my country (1 Kings v. 4—see also Num. xiv. 24, Deut. xii. 10, Heb. i. 10.) Hence comes also מִסָּבִיב (Mesav) which has two significations, 1st, denoting the things or persons placed in circle, round about another thing or person occupying the middle of that circle (see 2 Kings xviii. 5.), מִסָּבִיבִי (Mesibey), in plur. “the environs, or places situated round about” (comp. Exod. xxviii. 11); 2d, it also signifies the act of making the circle of a company, and setting themselves down around a king, captain, prophet, elder, or any other great man. It is still the custom of the Arabs to sit round their chiefs, or round their religious instructor, who, in the centre of the circle, reads to them (or repeats) passages of the Koran. When the prophet Samuel was at Bethlehem, he said to Jesse and to the elders invited to feast on the sacrifice, לֹא נִסְבֵּיב (Lo Nasov), “We shall not make the circle,” *i.e.*, we shall not sit down in circle “till David come hither” (1 Sam. xvi. 11.) It is owing to this custom that David says, “The Lord is beheld with reverence by all (סָבִיבֵי, Sevivav) those that are round about him” (Ps. lxxxix. 7—comp. Ps. lxxvi. 11.) Hence in Rabbinical language *Mesibim* signifies the guests invited to form the circle round any great man, or the master of a feast, and the latter is called *Rosh Hamsibim*, “the head of the guests” that form the circle. Hence *Mesibo* signifies “his guest,” as in our verse.

Translators and commentators have overlooked the vast difference that exists between נִתְּנָה רִיחָהּ (Nathenu rêach), as chap. ii. 13, vii. 14, meaning, “they are sending forth a fragrance,” *i.e.*, did so, and are still doing so, and נִתְּנָה רִיחוֹ (Nathan reicho), as in the above verse, meaning, “It sent forth (or yielded) *all* its fragrance,” *i.e.*, and hath no more; as Judg. xvi. 19, “And his strength went from him,” *i.e.*, and left him none.

ness. Such was the case with Israel. When first they were convinced of the enormity of their crime they repented and mourned. But when informed of the pardon which Moses obtained for them, they were so elated that they forgot to be humble for their sin, and grew unreasonable in their petitions, demanding new revelations and signs, which could do them no good in their state of weakness, and at last betrayed, in their very prayers, an alarming degree of doubt and unbelief. From this precipitate satisfaction with their own condition and relation to their offended God, his severe answer has entirely cured them; for it recalled to their mind a vivid recollection of the golden calf round which they danced, exclaiming, "This is thy god, O Israel," and they remembered that this was done during the forty days' absence of Moses on Mount Sinai. "And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the Mount, they gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, "Up, make us gods which shall go before us, for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him." (Exod. xxxii. 1.) That shocking scene rose again, like a dark cloud, before their eyes, and, as they sorrowfully contemplated it, they saw that, instead of demanding more revelations from God and new manifestations of his love, and information in regard to the way he would feed them in the wilderness, or procure rest for them in Canaan, they should rather have continued in deep lamentation over their sin, and in humble prayer for the pardon of it. In this re-awakened state of mind, when the old wound began to bleed again and the soul to mourn afresh, the Bride exclaims, with a deep sigh of anguish, "While the King was with his guest," *i.e.*, while the Lord was with Moses on Mount Sinai giving him the tables of the law, and shewing him the pattern of the sanctuary in which he promised to dwell in the midst of us, "My spikenard hath yielded all its fragrance," *i.e.*, my faith has departed, my patience has given way, I have denied the God of my forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and "changed my glory for the image of an ox that eateth grass." Having thus forfeited all the covenant promises, and merited nothing but utter destruction, how wonderful is still his divine compassion towards me, that, instead of consuming me in his righteous judgment, he

promises to bear with me, to lead me by his commandments, statutes, and ordinances, as an unruly horse is led by the bridle and reins. "O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. . . . For mine iniquities have gone over my head, as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. . . . Lord, all my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hid from thee. . . . For I will declare mine iniquity, I will be sorry for my sin. . . . Forsake me not, O Lord, O my God be not far from me. Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation." (Ps. xxxviii.)

Now we suppose that it was during the period of this spiritual prosperity, of this humble and most befitting state of mind of the newly espoused and sincerely penitent Bride, that Moses went up a second time to the Lord on Mount Sinai, and, after tarrying again forty days, came down with other tables of the law, his face shining with such a lustre that Aaron and all Israel were afraid to approach him, so that it became necessary for him to put on a veil when he spoke to them. (Exod. xxxiv. 27—35.) It was also immediately after Moses had come down the second time that he renewed to Israel the glad tidings that the sanctuary was to be built, and that the Lord, having pardoned their transgression, had announced again his gracious condescension to dwell in the midst of them, between the Cherubim in the Most Holy Place. Moses, therefore, called upon Israel to bring, for the erection of the tabernacle, free-will offerings of gold and silver and precious stones, purple, scarlet, and fine linen, rams and badgers' skins, shittim-wood, oil for light, spices for the holy ointment and for the sweet incense. Never was there such a spectacle seen as was then witnessed at the foot of Mount Horeb. The whole nation seems to have been in an ecstasy of joy when it was announced to them that they were to be permitted to enjoy the great privilege of building a sanctuary to the almighty and sin-pardoning God. The hearts of all were at once opened, and everything, however precious in its nature, and however high in value, was brought, and offered with a willing and cheerful heart to Moses and the elders of Israel appointed to receive them. The precious ornaments they had lately laid aside, in token of mourning for their sin, they now, with tears of joy, brought and offered unto the Lord,

as if saying, "Thy glorious presence, Lord, is our most precious and beautiful ornament, far above all the precious jewels which this world can afford; and therefore we most willingly and joyfully part with the material and perishing for the spiritual and everlasting ornaments of thy divine splendour."* And such was their liberality and zeal, that Moses was obliged to make a proclamation through the camp to restrain their extraordinary liberality, for there was already more than was needed. And such, too, was the unparalleled activity of all, both men and women, who could spin, or engrave, or embroider, or aid in the work in any way, that the construction of the tabernacle, and the preparation of all its utensils, were finished in an astonishingly short time.† So that, on the first day of the first month of

* We invite the reader to compare Exod. xxxiii. 4 with xxxv. 22, and then return again to xxxiii. 5, "Therefore now, put off thy ornaments from thee, and I know (not, 'that I may know') what to make for thee," *i.e.*, golden censers for offering incense, an ark with a mercy seat, an ephod with Urim and Thummim, by which he should give his orders unto them, and lead them in the right way; and how willingly they entered into that proposal to change ornaments of the body into ornaments of the soul! To this change of the Bride's ornaments, David may refer in Ps. xlv., when, in verse 9, he said, "The consort is placed at thy right hand, adorned with the gold of Ophir," and in v. 13, "all the glories of the king's daughter," *i.e.*, all the good qualities of the Bride "are" (or "must be") "within," or spiritual qualities of the heart and soul, "which are more precious than her gold-embroidered robe," *i.e.*, these spiritual graces and qualities of the Bride are more precious to God than all the gold of Ophir—than all the world's richly embroidered robes and ornaments (see the Author's work on the Psalms *in loco*.)

† It was in the night of the 14th to the 15th day of the first month, called Nissan, that Israel left Egypt, and on the same day of the third month they came into the wilderness of Sinai (Exod. xix. 1.) Their travelling to the mountain of God, the repose they must have taken, their three days of preparation for the solemnities (v. 15, 16), and the six days that passed before the Lord called Moses into the cloud (xxiv. 16), must have occupied at least the other half of the third month. Then began the first forty days of Moses' stay on the mount, at the end of which he came to Israel's camp, and found the golden calf in the midst of them. We can scarcely assign to the events recorded in chapters xxxii. and xxxiii. less than another forty days, during which Israel had time to consider their crime and repent. After this Moses remained other forty days on the mountain before he came down with the second tables of the law, and a renewed order for building the tabernacle, so that the building of the tabernacle could not have begun earlier than towards the beginning of the eighth month. It was finished at the end of that year. Josephus, in his *Antiq.*, chap. viii. 4, assigns seven months for the work, but he forgot the second forty days of Moses' stay on the mount, and in order to conceal the golden calf, made many false calculations of time.

the second year from their departure out of Egypt, Israel had the inconceivable joy of seeing not only the tabernacle erected, and its altar set up, and all its sacred vessels prepared, but also "a cloud covering the tent of the Congregation (from without), and the glory of the Lord filling the tabernacle" (within.) "And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the Congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." (Exod. xl. 34, 35.) Israel saw then the promise of the Lord fulfilled, saying, "And there will I meet with the children of Israel, and they shall be sanctified by my glory.

. . . And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. . . . And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubim, which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel." (Ex. xxix. 43, 45, xxv. 22.) Hence Solomon makes the Bride farther say :

13. A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me :
Between my breasts he will abide.*
14. As a cluster of cypress-flowers
In the vineyards of En-gedi,†
So is my beloved to me.

* יָלִין (Yalin) means here "abide" or "dwell," and it has the same signification in the following passages, Ruth i. 16; Job xvii. 2, xix. 4, xli. 13 or 22; Ps. xxv. 13, xlix. 13; Prov. xv. 31; Is. i. 21, &c., &c. Whenever it is intended to denote only a night's stay, it is either accompanied with the N. לַיְלָה (Lailah) "night," as Gen. xxxii. 13, 21; Num. xxii. 8; Josh. iv. 3, viii. 9; Ruth iii. 13, &c., or it is clearly implied by the context, as Gen. xix. 2, xxiv. 54, xxviii. 11, xxxi. 54; Exod. xxiii. 18, xxxiv. 25; Deut. xxi. 23; Josh. vi. 11; Judg. xix. 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15, 20, xx. 4; 2 Sam. xvii. 8; Jer. xiv. 8; &c., &c. It is thus certain that in the above verse it cannot signify "lie over night," as it has been erroneously rendered, but must mean "abide or dwell" permanently, as it refers to the abiding of the Shechinah between the Cherubim.—See Exposition.

† קֹפֶר (Kopher) and in plur. קֹפְרִים (Kepharim) as chap. iv. 13, denotes the Cypress plant, called in arabic El-Henna, which produces white and odoriferous flowers, shaped like clusters of grapes. It was called *Kopher*, from "cover," because the eastern ladies made a solution with its leaves and flowers, and coloured with it parts of their body. Even now the Arabian women use its pulverised leaves and flowers to tinge with it (when dissolved) their hair, brows, lips, and hands, which gives them a saffron-like colour. It seems that the vineyards of

In verse 12 the Bride lamented that while Moses was forty days with her Lord on Mount Sinai her spikenard had lost its fragrance; in other words, that on that occasion her faith and patience had failed and were lost, but seeing now that, notwithstanding all her past shortcomings, her beloved Lord came to dwell between the cherubim in the sanctuary which she prepared for him, she says, "True, my bundle of spices has lost its fragrance, but what if my Lord chooses still to dwell with me! True, my own merit is lost, but what a glorious privilege is that still bestowed on me! True, I have reason to mourn for having provoked such a great King and gracious God, but how much more reason to rejoice in seeing that, notwithstanding all my sins and imperfections, he graciously condescends to make his presence dwell in the midst of us!"

The figure employed in these two verses is not less splendid and beautiful than its spiritual substance. In the East the brides as well as the bridegrooms used much precious ointments on the days of their espousals, and carried also in their bosoms, within their loose upper garments, small bundles of odoriferous flowers and spices, as the African women do to this day, who wear such bundles in their bosom, and suspended by a silk thread on their necks. The Bride in our Song is supposed to have been provided with a bundle of spikenard, with which she intended to regale her Bridegroom when he entered the banquetting house or saloon, where the guests and the Bride await him, and approached to salute her according to custom. But unfortunately the Bridegroom being detained a long time in another chamber by one of the guests, the Bride's precious bundle of spikenard yielded all its fragrance and became useless. While she is greatly troubled at that untoward occurrence, and afraid lest the Bridegroom on coming to her would be displeased, and consider himself insulted and slighted, He of whom David said, "All thy garments smell of myrrh and aloes" enters the room, approaches her, assures her of his unaltered and sincere love and affection, and sits

En-gedi, (a city of Judah situated towards the western shore of the Dead Sea,) were, in the days of Solomon, famous for the production of this precious plant, which is a native of India and Egypt. From Egypt it was probably brought in presents to Solomon, who planted it at En-gedi.

down beside her. She thus doubly triumphs over her loss ; for not only had none of the sad consequences she feared followed, but it is more than supplied by the delicious odours, by the all-pervading fragrance, of the Bridegroom's ointments and spices, which so fill the room that none of the guests could have the least idea that her bundle of spikenard had lost its fragrance. So also the Bride doubly rejoices, 1st, in having escaped the sad and dreaded consequences of her loss, and 2d, in the all-sufficiency of her beloved Bridegroom. At the same time the whole event serves greatly to increase her love and gratitude to her Bridegroom, seeing she had nothing to recommend her to him, and that he had now become to her all in all. Israel had lost faith, patience, and hope while Mo-es absented himself during forty days, and had no visible sign of the Lord's presence, as during the days of Sinai. This she discovered, and mourned and lamented that her bundle of spikenard had lost its fragrance. But when she saw the wonderful patience, long-suffering, love, and divine compassion of her God, and that her Covenant Angel came after all to dwell in the midst of her camp, she is overwhelmed with astonishment at the loving kindness with which she was treated, and enthusiastically exclaims, " True, my bundle of spikenard has lost its odour, my merit is gone, my patience has failed, and my faith has suffered shipwreck, but ' O what manner of love ! ' Is not he, who loves me after all my faults, all sufficient ! Why art thou downcast, O my soul ? and why art thou disquieted within me ? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance and my God." * " When my flesh and my heart faileth, God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever." † " He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel : the Lord his God is with him, and the shout (proclamation of the presence) of a king is among them. ‡ " The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation." § " So foolish was I and ignorant ; I was as a beast before thee. Nevertheless I am continually with thee (i.e., for thou art continually with me) ; thou hast taken me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." ||

* Ps. xlii. 11. † Ps. lxxiii. 26. ‡ Num. xxiii. 21.

§ Ps. cxviii. 14. || Ps. lxxiii. 22—24.

This was exactly what the gracious God desired to see in the heart and disposition of Israel, his inexperienced Bride—he wanted to see her stripped of all imagined merit, of all self-righteousness and self-esteem, and place all merit and all confidence in his righteousness, in his love, and in his guidance. When, therefore, he heard her humble confession and affectionate declaration renouncing all on her side, and putting all her trust and delight in him, he said—

THE LORD.

15. Behold thou art beautiful, O my love (or beloved companion)—
Behold thou art beautiful, thine eyes *are* like doves.

Simon bar Jonah became Peter, the rock on which the Lord Jesus built his Church, not on himself, nor by himself; for, like all others, he was a poor and helpless sinner, needing salvation by free grace; but it was on his confession and declaration that Jesus was the Son of God—a confession which not flesh and blood, but the Holy Spirit enabled him to make. So the ancient Church of God became a beloved companion, full of beauty and attractive grace in the sight of God the moment she was convinced of her own unworthiness and of the goodness, compassion, and unchangeable love of her God and maker. The moment she made a corresponding confession her divine lover exclaimed, “Behold, thou art beautiful, O my beloved companion,” *i.e.*, Now that thou beholdest thyself in the right mirror, now that thou acknowledgest thy own unworthiness and my righteousness, thy weakness and my power, thy backsliding and my faithfulness, thy defects and my all-sufficiency, thou art become beautiful, and art worthy of my love and company. “Behold, thou art beautiful, with eyes like doves” (or “with dove’s eyes”) *i.e.*, herein lies thy beauty, that thou art faithful and submissive, and that thine eye is single—herein consists thy value, that thou ceasest to look to or to confide in thyself, and that thou lookest to me for everything—herein lies thy attractiveness, in that thou art harmless like a dove. In the Hebrew of this verse there is no word for the comparative “like,” but only עֵינַיִךְ יְיָ (Eyuayich Yonim) “thine eyes doves,” but it is easy to see

from the relation of the context that the phrase "Behold thou art beautiful" is closely connected with the phrase "thine eyes *are* doves," and that the meaning must be that her beauty thus praised consisted in this, that she had single eyes like doves, which her confession proved her to have. Hence the repetition of the phrase, "Behold thou art beautiful," as referring to her eyes possessing the qualities of doves. An acquaintance with the nature and habits of that beautiful creature, its modesty, simplicity, humility, attachment, loveliness, cleanliness, harmlessness, and faithfulness to its mate, will show why it is employed in Scripture as an example to man. The conditions on which the Lord espoused Israel as a peculiar nation unto him may be seen in the following words, "Ye shall walk after the Lord your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve Him and cleave unto Him" (Deut. xiii. 4.) And in the promise, "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine; and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and holy nation" (Ex. xix. 5, 6.) Glorious conditions indeed, but to accomplish them Israel needed not only a thorough knowledge of God and his law and will, but a thorough knowledge of themselves, and the attainment of the latter is the more difficult of the two, for the most of those that "perish for lack of knowledge" do so, not because they are ignorant that God is great and merciful, but because they know not, or refuse to know, that they are sinful, helpless, and miserable. This is the reason why that humble confession of Israel was so much valued and praised by God, and why Moses so often tried to humble Israel by showing them their unworthiness and Jehovah's mercy (Deut. ix. 4—29), and why he said to them, "Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end" (Deut. viii. 16.) If a sinner's salvation is built up by faith, humility must be the cement of the building, or else it will fall to ruins. The Bride, therefore, having received such a flattering and encouraging testimony because of her humble confession, immediately responds to it, saying:

THE CHURCH.

16. Behold thou art beautiful, O my beloved,
Thou art very sweet,
 Our pavilion also is very pleasant.*
17. The beams of our house are cedars,
 Our rafters are firs.

Precious as is the soul of a repenting sinner to the compassionate God, beautiful as is in His sight His dearly purchased Church, still the greater progress the latter makes in experience, in knowledge, and in grace, the humbler she becomes; and the greater praise she receives from her God and Redeemer for her faithfulness, devotedness, and humble prayers, the more she is forced to say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy faithfulness,"† "Gracious is the Lord, and righteous, yea, our God is merciful. The Lord preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me. Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt

* עֵשׂוּ (Eress) never signifies "bed," in any sense of the word, as it is usually, but incorrectly rendered, but always "pavilion," or "palanquin," and was a sort of couch of ease with four pillars and cover to shelter from the sun when in the open court, used by great men, princes, and kings, who alone could enjoy that convenience either when oppressed with fatigue or when a little indisposed; and only during the day. (See Amos iii. 12, vi. 4, where עֵשׂוּ and מִטָּה [mittah] are both described as such, and used by luxuriant persons during and after their repasts.) This pavilion was usually provided with rich carpets and tapestries, according to the eastern luxuries. It being exclusively used by day, hence it is placed in the following passages in contradistinction to מִשְׁכָּב (mishkab), "night couch," Job vii. 13, Ps. xli. 3; and no less evidently Ps. cxxxii. 3 and Prov. vii. 16, refer to that rich sort of covered couch or pavilion used for luxurious ease by day, and not as a bed by night. The word has the same signification in Deut. iii. 11, and the dimensions of its breadth is easily explained; for gigantic Og, whenever tired with his Nimrodian exploits, reposed himself in it, and his queen sat beside him. Though the adj. רַעֲנָן (Raanan) is often applied to a tree, and denotes its flourishing vigour, the riches of its branches and leaves, as Deut. xii. 2, Ps. xxxvii. 35, lii. 8, &c., it also signifies "pleasant, agreeable," as Ps. xcii. 10, "I was anointed with fragrant or 'pleasant' oil." See the author's exposition of that Psalm. † Ps. cxv. 1.

bountifully with thee. . . . I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.”* The humiliation of the Church, and the important confession made by her in verses 12—14, elicited the Lord’s eulogium, “Behold, thou art beautiful, O my beloved companion;” but the very humiliation that procured the approbation of the Lord, made the modest and humble Church exclaim again, “Not I, O God, but thou art full of beauty and attractive glory, worthy of the most ardent love; and of the highest praise; for ‘thou art very sweet,’ and full of tender mercy and divine compassion—and, therefore, our *pavilion*, thy sanctuary into which thou hast graciously invited me to come, and regarding which thou hast said, ‘And there will I meet with the children of Israel, and they shall be sanctified by my glory’†—is very pleasant and very precious to me. “How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! my soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord, my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. . . . Blessed are they that dwell in thy house; they shall continue to praise thee for ever.”‡ In the last verse the figure speaks of the strength and preciousness of the wood of which the tabernacle was constructed, as being cedar§ and fir, and not liable to corruption; and the meaning of it is that the Church rejoiced in the hope that she would always enjoy that blessed communion with her God, and dwell with him in His sanctuary for ever. “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will

* Ps. cxvi. 5—9.

† Exod. xxix. 44.

‡ Ps. lxxxiv. 1, 2—4

§ Though according to Exod. xxvi. 15—30, the boards of the tabernacle were to be of *Shittim wood*, the fifty-six pillars for the outer court, &c., described in chap. xxvii., might have been of cedar and fir. Nor do we know exactly at present what that *Shittim wood* was; if not a sort of cedar, though not from Lebanon. (See Is. xli. 19, where אֲרֶז (cedar) and שִׁטִּי (Shittah) go together as if the same sort of tree.)

But we must remember above all, that Solomon in this Song took his figures from things, customs, and scenery peculiar to his country and time. So in verse 14 he makes the Church in the wilderness allude to the cypress flowers of the vineyards of Engedi, probably only planted by himself; and so he may describe the tabernacle as having its beams and rafters (or pillars) of cedars and firs; for such and greater allowances still must be made for poetical figures. But, as was remarked above, cedar and fir might really have entered into the building of the tabernacle for all we know of it; or the Shittim wood might have been occasionally called cedar, though not of Lebanon.

dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."* "For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret places of his tabernacle shall he hide me: he shall set me upon a rock."†

CHAPTER II.

ARGUMENT OF THE FIRST SEVEN VERSES OF CHAP. II. WHICH BELONG TO THE FIRST PART OF THE SONG.

(V. 1.) The Bride humbly acknowledges that she was chosen by grace, and not because of her merits. (V. 2.) The Lord compares his Bride to a lily surrounded with thorns, so is she with enemies. (Vv. 3, 4.) The Church of God in the wilderness is brought into the sanctuary (the tabernacle) and expresses her delight. (V. 5.) She is overwhelmed by the manifestation of the Lord's glory and calls for support. (V. 6.) She receives it from the Lord, and is refreshed and strengthened. (V. 7.) The Church, jealous lest other nations, attracted by her glory (in the Lord her Bridegroom), should try to supplant her love and become her rivals, conjures them not to disturb her love till it become ripe.

THE CHURCH.

1. I am like the rose of Sharon,
Like the lily of the valleys.

שָׁרוֹן (Sharon) means "a plain," any considerable tract of level land, situated in a valley, or on elevated ground as table-land, whether it be fertile or sandy soil, rich in pastures or the reverse. The Sharon, or plain situated between Mount Tabor and the Lake of Tiberias, happened to be rich in pastures (see 1 Chron. xxvii. 29; Is. xxxiii. 9, xxxv. 2, lxx. 10); but this was not the reason of its being called Sharon; for it would have been so called from its situation and character, although it had not produced a single blade of grass. It is evident that there were more than one Sharon in the land of Israel; for whereas the great Sharon was beyond Jordan in the land of Gilead and Bashan, which was conquered by Moses and divided among the two and a half tribe (see 1 Chron. v. 16, the Gadites dwelt in Gilead, in Bashan, and the suburbs of Sharon: of the large plain or

* Ps xxiii 6.

† Ps xxvii. 5.

plains), Joshua conquered and killed a king of Sharon on the other side of Jordan (see Josh. xii. 18.) Moreover Sharon must be a collective noun for plains of a certain form and situation, just as Carmel signified fertile mountains covered with vineyards. Now the Mount Carmel of the prophets Elijah and Elisha, or rather the mountainous chain, extending from the plain Esdraelon to the borders of the great sea, was in the territory of the half tribe of Manasseh, while the tribe of Judah had also a Carmel in their lot (see Josh. xv. 55), where Nabal had his possessions and pastures (see 1 Sam. xxv. 2), and where King Saul set up the trophy of his victory over Amalek (1 Sam. xv. 12.) Both these Carmels, or fertile mountains covered with vineyards, had their plains or Sharons at the foot of them which were rich in pastures as the mountains were rich in vineyards (see Mich. iii. 14.) Hence the prophet Isaiah joins them together, saying, "the excellency of Carmel and Sharon" (Is. xxxv. 2.) But a plain, although fertile and proper for the pasture of herds and flocks, is certainly not the most suitable place for roses and lilies, unless when wild and growing here and there; and even then they must be exposed to the tread of cattle, and to the mischievous gambols of rams and goats. It is therefore a mere fancy to suppose that the Sharon of Judea must have been eminent for beautiful roses, remarkable for colour and fragrance—a fancy built upon a misunderstood passage, and a mistaken Sharon, for in our verse there is no allusion to any particular Sharon, and it must indeed be taken in a sense quite opposite from that which they force upon it. But besides this radical mistake about the Sharon, and the sense of the phrase, into which some expositors have fallen, we must remark that while we find mutual praises and endearments frequently exchanged between Bridegroom and Bride, we do not find an instance of either of them praising themselves; and to suppose such a deviation here from usage and good taste, is the height of absurdity.

The Church in the wilderness, recently humbled, but again restored to divine favour, heard with great astonishment her Lord declare, "Behold, thou art beautiful, O my love" (or, beloved companion), but she soon returned those compliments to Him to whom alone they are due, saying, in her turn, that it was He who is really beautiful and sweet,

&c. And now she retakes her harp, and humbly adds, with regard to herself, "I am like the rose of Sharon," a green spot in a desert, a single rose in a vast plain, altogether "like the lily of the valleys"—an isolated and wild lily in the valleys. If, therefore, there be any beauty, any good quality in me, it is in Thy sight; for, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance."* Thou hast found me among other wild plants and flowers, and hast chosen me as thy rose and lily, though there was no beauty nor attractiveness in me, therefore the whole glory and honour is thine. It is thy love, thy goodness, thy free grace, that has made me what I am, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength."† Whilst in myself I am not better than others, I have nothing to boast of, "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord."‡ To which her gracious Lord replies:

THE LORD.

2. As the lily among the thorns
 So is my love (or beloved companion) among the
 daughters.

Although thou seest no beauty in thyself, I see it—though thou seest not the reason of my preferring thee to all other nations, I know it. Thou art not a wild plant like all the rest; for thou art of the stock of Abraham, my friend, of Isaac the son of the promise, and of Jacob, whom I loved; "I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the first ripe in the fig-tree at her first time."§ I found thee in Egypt, surrounded with thorns, well nigh destroyed by these cruel enemies, but I plucked thee out, as a rose and a lily from the midst of them, and brought thee hither. "When Israel was young I loved him; and out of Egypt I called forth my son."|| Thou art still surrounded by thorns, by mighty enemies who threaten thy existence, but remember that thou art my lily, "I will draw thee with the cords of man, with the bands of love,"¶ and while I shall protect thee as my lovely lily, I shall treat thine enemies as thorns. The substance of this verse we find in

* Ps. xxxiii. 12.

‡ Hos. ix. 10.

† Is. xlv. 24.

|| Hos. xi. 1.

‡ Ps. xxxiv. 2.

¶ Hos. xi. 4.

the following passage, "But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham, my friend. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth . . . and said unto thee, Thou art my servant, I have chosen thee and will not cast thee away. Fear thou not; for I am with thee . . . I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. Behold, all they that are incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded . . . and they that strive with thee shall perish . . . for I am Jehovah, thy God, who holdeth thee by thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not, I will help thee."*

THE CHURCH.

3. As the citron-tree among the trees of the wood,†
 So is my beloved among the sons;
 Under His shade I delight to sit down (or dwell)
 And His fruit is sweet to my palate.

The Church of God in the wilderness, having been compared by the Lord himself to a lily surrounded with thorns, remembering who her Lord and protector was, and what marvellous proofs of his protecting love he had already manifested towards her, takes courage, and says, as it were, "True, I have many enemies, but I have also an almighty defender—true, I am hated and persecuted by all other nations, but I have a sure refuge, an impregnable fortress—true, I have to traverse the wilderness under a scorching sun, and fight hard at every step; and were I during this hard struggle to seek shade and shelter under the branches of any tree of this world, under any earthly prince or nation, I would only obtain a momentary shade from the fading leaves, and then starve with hunger and faint from exhaustion; but I have found in the Lord a beautiful citron-tree, delightful for its shade, and richly laden with generous and

* Is. xli 8—13.

† See Parkhurst's Hebrew Lexicon under צִיטֹן, vii., where it is judiciously and satisfactorily proved that צִיטֹן (Tapuach) means the citron-tree, and so we render it in all the passages where it occurs in this Song.

refreshing fruit—I have found a mighty God—a generous and loving benefactor, a sure refuge in time of trouble, a rich source of support and consolation in days of affliction, what matter is it then to me that I am surrounded with thorns! “The Lord is for me, I will not fear: what can man do unto me? It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes. All nations compassed me about, but in the name of the Lord will I destroy them. . . . The Lord is my strength and glory; he is become my salvation.”*

But as we have remarked above, the Song at this stage celebrates that happy period when the tabernacle, with all its utensils, was finished and erected at the foot of Mount Sinai; when the pillar of cloud in which the Angel of the Covenant dwelt, and which had remained, since Israel’s sin, by the temporary tent erected at some distance from the camp, now covered the tabernacle above, while the glory of the Lord filled it within; then, assuredly, could Israel say that the Lord was like a beautiful citron tree unto her, under whose shade she sat down, and in whose fruit she delighted. Or in the language of David, “I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever; I will take refuge under the covert of thy wings.” † “To see thy power and thy glory, as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. . . . My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips” (or, with the lips of nightingales. ‡ This language we find in her mouth in the following verse.

4. He brought me into the banqueting house,
And His banner over me is love.

When Moses had finished the erection, the anointing, and the sanctification of the tabernacle, and the altar for sacrifice, and all their sacred instruments and vessels, then began the celebration of the solemn feast of dedication. During the first seven days, the Priests and Levites were consecrated to their holy offices by sacrifices, lustrations, sprinkling of blood, and by being anointed with the holy ointment prepared for that purpose (see Lev. viii.) The 8th day was the feast of Israel in general, when the

* Ps. cxviii. 6–14.

† Ps. lxi. 4.

‡ Ps. lxi. 2–5.

whole nation's sin-offerings, burnt and peace-offerings, were brought to the altar (see Lev. ix.). Then began the dedication feast of the twelve princes of the twelve tribes, which lasted during the twelve successive days, in each of which one of the princes presented himself before the tabernacle with his *banner* (the colours and inscription of the name of his tribe—see Num. ii.), accompanied by the elders of the families, judges, and officers, as well as by the whole tribe, and presented his gifts and sacrifices to be offered on the altar, and there the prince and his tribe feasted on the peace-offerings (see Num. vii.) But none of the twenty days of dedication was so distinguished as the eighth, and none of the sacrifices received such special tokens of gracious acceptance as those offered for the whole nation, as we read in Lev. ix. 22—24, “And Aaron lifted up his hand towards the people, and blessed them, and came down from offering of the sin-offering, and the burnt-offering, and peace-offerings. And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of the congregation, and came out, and blessed the people, and the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the people. And there came a fire out from before the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt-offering and the fat; and when all the people saw this, they shouted, and fell on their faces.” This was a glorious day for all Israel—such splendid tokens of divine love were granted neither during the first seven days when the priests and Levites were consecrated, nor during the twelve days, when each prince of a tribe under his special banner had his sacrificial feast day. But this great display of celestial splendour was confined to the eighth day, in which all Israel collectively were presented at the altar and sanctuary. Then the invisible Prince of all the tribes displayed his own glorious *banner* in fire from heaven, in light, majesty, and *love*. It is to this event we understand the Church of God refers in the Song when she says:—“He brought me into the banqueting house.” He brought all Israel to the sanctuary to offer sacrifices of reconciliation and joy—“And his banner over me was and is love.” In the Hebrew text the noun “Love” is not qualified by any tense, but is literally, “And his banner over me! love!” as if exclaimed in ecstasy, “O what manner of love!” O what a glorious banner is that of our chief and divine Prince! It is not like the perishing banners of our earthly princes;

his is love everlasting, condescending, disinterested, and divine. "How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the rivers of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life, in thy light we shall see light."*

Now in the above quoted passage of Lev. ix. 22—14, we have seen that, when all of a sudden the glory of the Lord filled the sanctuary, and the fire from heaven came down upon the altar to consume the sacrifices, the people were so overwhelmed by that extraordinary manifestation of the Lord's glory and love, that they shouted and fell on their faces. This scene Solomon exhibits in a poetical form, and represents the Bride as if overpowered by the marvellous manifestation of her Bridegroom's majesty and love, falling into a swoon, and, while yet in a fainting state, exclaiming,

2. O! support me with cordials!
 Strengthen me with citrons!
 For I languish with love (or, am faint from love).

But the fainting Bride, thus overpowered by the unexpected and overwhelming manifestation of her Bridegroom's love, is soon graciously supported, refreshed, and restored; and when she awakens, she finds herself in the mighty but tender arms of her Beloved, and lifting, as it were, her eyes towards Him, she says:—

6. His left hand is under my head,
 And His right embraceth me.

The beauty of this whole passage is so striking, its figures so expressive, and its sentiments so clear, that, having once indicated the event in Israel's history to which it refers—that before Mount Sinai—we have not much to add in the way of comment or illustration, but to recommend it to the reader's serious meditation, and silent admiration. But one remark with regard to the figure employed in this verse. When the overwhelmed Israelites arose from the swoon

* Ps. xxxvi. 7—9.

produced by the extraordinary manifestation of Divine love, when the revived Bride lifted up her eyes again after having fallen fainting on her face, she saw that the glory of her Beloved still filled the sanctuary, that the bright cloud still rested upon the tabernacle, and that the pillar of cloud still surrounded her camp by day, and was a pillar of brilliant fire by night. The figure, "His left hand is under my head," indicates the pillar of cloud which surrounded the camp, "And his right hand embraceth me," his glory in and upon the sanctuary. Thus Moses in his last song said, "For the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness. He compassed him about, he instructed him; he kept him as the apple of his eye. As the eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth out her wings, taketh them and beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange God with him."*

One of the spiritual sentiments contained in verses 5 and 6 was beautifully and elegantly expressed by the sweet singer of Israel, when he said to the Lord, "My soul followeth hard after thee, thy right hand upholdeth me."† Again, "Thou hast given me the shield of thy salvation, and with thy right hand thou hast supported me, and thy gentleness hath made me great" (or, "and thy meekness hath exalted me.")‡

The covenant which the Lord made with Israel at Mount Sinai had already, before the above-mentioned event, been confirmed by the blood of sacrifices offered on a temporary altar, immediately after the giving of the law (see Exod. xxiv. 1—9). But that covenant was now confirmed anew, and regularly ratified by the sacrifices offered on the permanent altar of the sanctuary. The Bride, after having witnessed the love of God in such an extraordinary manner, having feasted upon the peace-offerings of his altar, having rejoiced before him during twenty days, and having been able from experience to say with David, "Blessed is he whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee; that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple,"§

* Deut. xxxii. 9—12.

† Ps. xviii. 35.

‡ Ps. lxiii. 8.

§ Ps. lxv. 4.

became apprehensive, as it were, lest any of the other nations, envying her felicity, should become her rival, and thus divide the love of her Lord. Solomon, therefore, makes her in the following verse adjure all other nations not to disturb her happiness before it is perfect.

7. I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
By the roes, or by the hinds of the field,
If ye stir up, or if ye disturb this love,
Until it hath (or, shall) become complete.*

When Laban, warned by God, could do no harm to Jacob, whom he overtook at the mountain of Gilead, he assumed at once the appearance of a kind and affectionate father, and requested his son-in-law to join in a covenant of eternal friendship with him, and promise by an oath not to afflict his daughters, or take other wives beside them. The only witness taken on that occasion was an heap of stones which the bystanders made on the stone which Jacob first set up. This heap Jacob in Hebrew called Galed, and Laban in Syriac called Yegar-Sahadutha, both names signifying the same thing, viz., "The heap is a witness." So Laban said, "This heap is a witness between me and thee this day;" again, "Behold this heap, and behold this pillar, which I have cast between me and thee: This heap be witness . . . that I will not pass over this heap to thee (or that I will not trespass against thee in the covenant which it witnessed to), and that thou shalt not pass over this heap unto me, for harm" (Gen. xxxi. 46—54.) Moreover, though both parties had many friends present (it seems from verses 37, 46, and 54 that some of Jacob's friends of Padan-aram accompanied him, or having heard of his danger from Laban had come to his aid), still Laban said, "There is no man with us. Behold, God is witness betwixt me

* Or, "Until it shall have accomplished," *i.e.*, before this love has accomplished the matrimonial engagement, until the marriage be consummated; for this was the רָצוֹן (Chephetz), or chief object, or ultimate result, of the רָצוֹן (Ratson), of the desire expressed by that love. See the Author's Translation and Exposition of the Psalms, pp. 429, where the meaning of רָצוֹן is largely explained, and shewn to signify not the primary desire or wish of anything, but the ultimate object to be attained by that wish or desire.

and thee," *i.e.*, while those friends would soon disperse or perhaps soon die, God would remain their witness in heaven, and the heap of stones their witness on earth. So we read that Joshua, when he renewed the covenant with Israel, before his death, took a large stone and erected it under an oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord, and said unto Israel, "Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us; it shall be therefore a witness against you, lest ye deny your God." (Josh. xxiv. 26, 27, comp chap. xxii.)

This mode of choosing a witness at the making of covenants and taking solemn vows, was very common in the East in ancient times. Nor did they confine themselves to inanimate things, as stones, trees, &c., but they often chose as witnesses animals that happened to run by on the occasion, with examples of which the Talmud abounds. It was therefore quite natural and beautiful in a pastoral, like Solomon's Song, to make the Bride adjure the daughters of Jerusalem by roes and hinds of the field, as the colloquy is presumed to have taken place in the country where some of those timid animals would often make their appearance on some of the neighbouring mountain cliffs. So much for the figure. But as we know that the scene of the Song, at this stage, was the wilderness of Sinai, nothing could be more appropriately chosen by the Bride than these swift and beautiful inhabitants of the desert as witnesses against the daughters of Jerusalem in the event of their becoming her rivals, and disturbing that love which now, more than ever, was dear to her heart. Here we must remember the unspeakable value that Israel put on in the fact that she was the only chosen nation of God*—that this exclusive privilege, by the appointment of God, was to continue till the coming of Shiloh, unto whom the nations were to gather—that the Lord himself fostered this religious jealousy in the hearts of Israel by many addresses of Moses and the prophets—and that whenever they ceased to be jealous over these greatest of privileges they immediately fell.† These things show us how natural it was for Solomon to represent that jealousy by the figure of the Bride, fearing least any others, through envy of her

* 2 Sam. vii. 23; Ps. c. 3, xcvi. 7, cxlix.

† Lev. xx. 24; Deut. iv. 23, vii. 6, xiv. 2, xxxiii. 29; Is. xliii. 21, xliv. 21—24, &c., &c.

glory and happiness, should insinuate themselves into the Bridegroom's love and favour, before the time appointed, and conjuring them by the roes and hinds of the field not to disturb that wonderful love, before it should be ripened, that is, before it should be confirmed and sealed by the very blood of the Bridegroom, when the veil should be torn and the wall of partition for ever demolished, and all nationality in regard to the kingdom of heaven cease; as we shall see touchingly foretold in the eighth chapter of this Song.

With this passage the first part of the Song ends. The Covenant made with Israel at Sinai having been thus finally confirmed, and the love of God to his chosen people manifested in such a wonderful manner, and the Bride being not only decided to remain faithful, but jealous of her glory and happiness, having conjured the daughters of Jerusalem not to disturb that love—a new period and new events will now begin to be celebrated. The second part begins with the eighth verse of the second and ends with the fifth verse of the third chapter, with a new manifestation of the Bridegroom's glory and love in Solomon's temple on Mount Sinai, with the same ratification of the Covenant, with the same jealousy of the Bride, and with the same adjuration.

PART II.

ARGUMENT.

(Vv. 8, 9.) Graphic descriptions of the manifestations of the Angel in the pillar of cloud, and that pillar leading Israel in their journeys. Here the dark period of the long *winter night* is leaped over, and vv. 10—13 contain the Lord's orders and directions to Israel to rise and cross the river Arnon, and begin to fight the opposing nations, first on this side and then beyond Jordan. (V. 14.) The Lord reminds Israel his Bride, that whenever she should find herself in difficulties and hard pressed by her enemies, whether on this side Jordan or beyond, she should call on him in prayer and supplication, and that he will come to her aid. (V. 15.) The Lord commands Israel to destroy the Canaanites, and not make peace or intermingle with any of these idolatrous nations who would defile her and destroy her garden. All this was, as it were, the Lord's farewell address to his Bride before crossing the Jordan when he was to be seen no more by her in the pillar of cloud, until his re-appearance in Solomon's temple. To this the Bride replies in verse 16, and in verse 17 she prays her beloved that he might be always near her (though invisible) during her fight and struggles in the mountains of Judea, until the night of war should be over, and he should appear on Mount Zion again.

THE CHURCH.

8. The voice of my Beloved !
Behold, it is He that cometh,
Leaping over the mountains,
Bounding over the hills—
9. My beloved is like a roe, or a young hart :
Behold it is He who standeth behind our wall,
Looking through the windows,
Shining through the lattice.

This is a magnificent description of the varied movements, the "leapings and boundings," the disappearances and reappearances of the bright pillar in which the Angel of the Covenant dwelt. When Israel commenced their journey out of Egypt it is recorded, "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way ; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light, so that they might go day

and night.* When the army of the Egyptians pursued them hard, and nearly touched their rear guard, "The Angel of God, which went before the host of Israel, removed and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud removed from before their face, and stood behind them. And he (the Angel in the cloud) came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and there was the cloud and the darkness (*i.e.*, to the Egyptians) while it gave light by night (unto Israel); so that the one came not near the other all that night.† On entering the wilderness of Sin, Israel murmured when remembering the flesh-pots of Egypt, and called loudly for bread, and the Angel, on account of their faithlessness, appears to have hid Himself for a time; for we read that when Aaron came to announce to Israel that the Lord would give them manna to eat, "And it came to pass, as Aaron spoke unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked towards the wilderness, and behold the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud."‡ At Rephidim (or Meribah) Israel murmured again for want of water, and the Lord hid Himself for a while, but reappeared again at Horeb on the Rock ("and that Rock was Christ"), from which when, smitten, there came forth water.§ During the period of the giving of the Law, the Angel in the cloud resided on Sinai with far greater brightness and splendour than before, and continued there during the twice forty days of Moses' visits to that sacred mountain; during which the promise was made to him, that on the erection of the sanctuary, the Angel in all His glory should abide in it, between the Cherubim.|| During the time that intervened between the two visits of Moses to Mount Sinai, and between his second descent and the erection of the tabernacle, the Angel in the cloud was hid, because of Israel's great sin; and only descended from time to time in front of the temporary tent which Moses had pitched far away from the camp¶ (comp. our observations on that subject, pp. 45). On the day in which the tabernacle was finished, and the sanctuary, the altar, and all their sacred utensils erected and arranged, all of a sudden, and, as it were, with one leap,

* Exod. xiii. 21. † Exod. xiv. 19—20 ‡ Exod. xvi. 10.

§ Exod. xvii. 6.

|| Exod. xix. 16—20, xxiv. 16—18, xxv. 8—22, xxix. 43.

¶ Exod. xxxiii. 7—11.

the marvellous cloud, and the blessed Angel in it, came and covered, and filled the sanctuary, as we read, "Then the cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation (or "of meeting," *i.e.*, where he met with God), because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And when the cloud removed from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys. But if the cloud removed not then they journeyed not till the day that it was removed; for the cloud of the Lord was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel in all their journeys."* But it is evident that none of these extraordinary manifestations of visible glory continued for any length of time, as Moses and the priests soon afterwards entered to continue their sacred services; and though the cloud still abode on the tabernacle, the unapproachable splendour was removed, and hid in the cloud, and in the inner sanctuary within the veil. It was the same on the eighth day of the dedication, when a new and great display of the angel's divine majesty took place on the occasion of the sacrifices offered for the whole people, when the glory of the Lord appeared to the whole people of Israel, and the fire from heaven descended on the altar (Lev. ix. 6, 23, 24, comp. our observations pp. 105). This was only for a short time, and soon disappeared, allowing the priests to go on with the regular services, and approach again to the altar.

The above manifestation of the divine glory in the sanctuary, and the confirmation of the covenant by the fire from heaven descending on the altar, took place on the eighth day of the feast of dedication, which was also the eighth day of the month Nissan, and a year all but one week after Israel's exodus out of Egypt. That memorable day was followed by the twelve days of the dedication feast for the princes of the twelve tribes, and thus this continued to the twentieth of Nissan, or the first month of the second year. After that feast Israel still remained one month quietly encamped at Mount Sinai, and the pillar of cloud rested on the tabernacle. But a month after the feast of dedication, behold the voice of the Beloved saying to his bride, Come and let us go

* Ex. xl. 34—38.

hence ; for we read : “ And it came to pass on the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year, that the cloud was taken up from off the tabernacle of the testimony. And the children of Israel took their journeys out of the wilderness of Sinai, and the cloud rested in the wilderness of Paran.”* That journey lasted only three days, as we read farther : “ and they departed from the Mount of the Lord three days’ journey ; and the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord went before them in the three days’ journey to search out a resting place for them. And the cloud of the Lord was upon them by day when they went out of the camp.”† A general and graphic account of these wonderful leadings of his people Israel through the wilderness, and his commanding their journeys and encampments by the pillar of cloud resting upon or removing from the tabernacle, is given by Moses in the following words : “ So it was always ; the cloud covered it (the tabernacle) by day, and the appearance of fire by night. And when the cloud removed from the tabernacle, then after that the children of Israel journeyed ; and in the place where the cloud abode there the children of Israel pitched their tents. At the commandment of the Lord the children of Israel journeyed, and at the commandment of the Lord they camped ; as long as the cloud abode on the tabernacle they rested in their tents. . . . And so it was when the cloud abode (only) from even unto the morning, and the cloud removed in the morning, then they journeyed ; whether it was by day or by night that the cloud removed, they journeyed. . . . At the commandment of the Lord they rested in their tents, and at the commandment of the Lord they journeyed ; they kept the charge of the Lord, at the commandment of the Lord by the hand of Moses.”‡ Now, be it observed, that in all the above passages, where the common version reads : “ at the commandment of the Lord,” in the Hebrew text it is “ by the mouth of the Lord ;” for the pillar’s resting quietly on the tabernacle, or removing hence and marching before them, leading them safely over mountains and hills, and unknown and pathless tracts of desert, and soon bringing them again to a secure place of encampment for recreation and repose, was in fact the Lord’s voice indicating to

* Num. x. 11, 12.

† Num. x. 33, 34.

‡ Num. ix. 16—23.

Israel their course. And we have many reasons for supposing that this wonderful and mysterious pillar of cloud, which troubled and confounded the Egyptian army at the Red Sea,* and from which, on Mount Sinai, emanated those terrible voices, thunderings, and lightnings and mighty sounds of trumpets, did also awake Israel's camp, and indicate by sounding voices the Angel's command to start—yea, we have many reasons for supposing that in marching before the host of Israel the cloud sent forth voices like the sound of mighty waters, thus breaking the monotony of a desert journey, and driving away the terrified Arab hordes, as well as the wild beasts in the neighbourhood. This fact we think distinctly indicated in the following passage, "And it came to pass, when the ark set forward that Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate thee flee before thee."† Now the Levites bearing the ark followed hard on the pillar of cloud, and marched also before the host of Israel. And did not the heathen prophet refer to these awful sounds which the pillar of cloud, the Angel's habitation, sent forth, while marching before His people, when he says of Israel: "The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. God Almighty brought them out of Egypt, the vibration (or spread, or pealing) of his voice is like that of an unicorn?"‡ This is the meaning of רַעֲדָה (thoaphoth) vibratory voice, spread or peal of voice, not "strength" as in the common version. In allusion to it the Psalmist said: "The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. . . . The voice of the Lord makes (or made) the wilderness tremble, yea the Lord maketh (or made) tremble the wilderness of Kadesh."§ And Deborah in her beautiful song said: "Lord, when thou wentest out of Seir, when thou marchest out of the field of Edom (*i.e.* Israel in the wilderness encompassed Mount Seir for many years, Deut. ii. 1, but were not to take it by the command of God, vers. 4—6), the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water. The mountains melted (or rolled) from before the Lord, even that Sinai from before the Lord God of Israel."||

Now we trust that enough has been said in illustration

* Exod. xiv. 24.

† Num. x. 35.

‡ Num. xxiii. 21, 22.

§ Ps. xxix. 4—8.

|| Judg. v. 45.

of the meaning of the Bride when she says : "The voice of my Beloved ! Behold, it is He that cometh leaping over the mountains, bounding over the hills." It is beautifully descriptive of the re-appearances of the Angel in the protecting pillar, after a short absence caused by their sins—of the distinct and extraordinary manifestations of the Angel's glory at different periods—of His frequently removing from the midst of the camp to a distance from it, and again coming to abide on the tabernacle—of the thundering voices which issued from the cloud at its removal from the tabernacle, and by which the whole camp was suddenly aroused, at midnight or midday, and prepared for the march—and of its movements before them, over the mountains and valleys, to the next place of encampment. Nor are the figures employed in verse ninth less beautiful. The roe and the hart are swift and playful, but exceedingly timid animals. To those encamped in the valleys, surrounded by the wood-covered hills, in which they abound, their beautifully formed heads and brilliant eyes are constantly appearing, now at one spot, now at another—at one time below the cliff of a rock, at another above it—now they approach the tents as if to welcome the strangers, and then in a moment they bound away to a great distance. So it was with the wonderful pillar of cloud. At one time it stood "behind the wall" of the tabernacle, then immediately over the tabernacle itself, filling it with such splendour and glory that it sent rays of dazzling light through the apertures, so that it formed a magnificent globe of light, shedding brightness and cheerfulness into Israel's camp during the night. Now it rested with serene tranquillity over the sanctuary, and then, in a moment, it ascended with the voice of ten thousand trumpets, and stood on some neighbouring hill, indicating whither they were to follow Him. As soon as the cloud ascended and moved forward, the vast host immediately followed, and thus He led them by day and night, until He brought them to a place where it pleased Him to make them rest ; there the sanctuary was speedily erected, and the ark of God placed again in the holiest of all ; "and when the ark rested, Moses said, Return, O Lord, unto the ten thousand thousands of Israel."* Then the blessed

* Num. x. 36.

Angel took possession again of His sanctuary, and sent forth streams of light into the camp of His beloved Bride. On coming out of their tents at even after they had encamped, and finding themselves enveloped in brilliant light, which they knew had been sent forth from the beloved Angel that dwelt between the cherubim to cheer his Bride amid the darkness of night, she again said, "Behold this is my Beloved, he stands behind our wall." As the cloud was at the same time a wall around their camp, and the tabernacle, in particular, their wall, a fiery wall of protection, with great propriety they could say, "Behold He stands behind" (or as the Hebrew word may signify) "within" our wall, He looks out from the windows (*i.e.*, from the apertures of the tabernacle), He is shining (or sparkling) through the lattice. That brightness is an emanation of His glory, a reflection of His divine majesty. "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?"* "God is the Lord, and he gave us light."† Hence the exalted language of Isaiah regarding the New Covenant Church, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. . . . And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising."‡ And John tells us from whom that light cometh; "And the light shineth in darkness. . . . That was the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."§ And in the new Jerusalem sun and moon will be no more; but the glory of the Lord and the Lamb will be her light.||

It has already been remarked that verses 8 and 9 bring us down to the period, when a month after the dedication of the tabernacle, the cloud suddenly removed from it, indicating to Israel to prepare for a journey, and to follow it. Then the Bride, having made the necessary preparation, left the scene of so many glorious and ever-memorable events, and manifestations of divine love and majesty, and followed her Beloved over mountains and valleys, and arrived, after three days' journey, in the wilderness of Paran. There the Angel in the cloud stopped, and thus indicated to His Bride to encamp. The Levites, to whom the duty was assigned, again erected the tabernacle; and the priests having placed the ark of the

* Ps. xxvii. 1. † Ps. cxviii. 27. ‡ Is. lx. 1—3. § John i. 5—9.
 || Rev. xxi. 23.

covenant into the inner sanctuary, and the altar and all the sacred vessels into their respective places, the cloud again covered the tabernacle, and the Angel resumed His place between the cherubim, whence, from time to time, He called His faithful servant, Moses, and gave him orders for the children of Israel.* “And when Moses was gone to the tabernacle of the congregation to speak with Him, then he heard the voice of One speaking unto him from off the mercy-seat, that was upon the ark of testimony, from between the cherubim; and thus He spake unto him.”†

THE GLOOMY WINTER SEASON.

Dear reader, at this stage of the Song we suddenly come upon a great chasm, a dark and dismal period of thirty-eight years; and why? Because the sacred poet was obliged to cast a dark mantle over the gloomy events of that long period—events more fitted for a tragedy than a Song, celebrating the highest, the purest, yea, celestial love. After the wonderful scenes of Mount Sinai, and as soon as Israel, after a three days' journey, came into the wilderness of Paran, all the beauties of summer suddenly disappeared, all the opening buds and fragrant flowers faded before the awful blast of a tempest, leaving scarcely a vestige of the previous luxuriance and splendour; and a long and horrid winter, cold, dark, tempestuous and gloomy, followed, which lasted without intermission for thirty-eight years.

The prophet Isaiah, when alluding to that dismal period, and the sudden changes which took place in Israel's condition, from the highest degree of happiness to the lowest misery and wretchedness, said, “And he (the Lord) said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their saviour. In all their afflictions he was afflicted, and the Angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled, and vexed his holy spirit; therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them.”‡ And so it happened when they arrived at Paran, they forgot the wonders of Sinai, mur-

* Lev. i. 1; Num. i. 1. † Num. vii. 89.

‡ Is. lxiii. 8—10.

mured against God, and so provoked Him to anger, that, instead of sending forth, as usual, His splendid and benignant light to cheer them, He sent a devouring fire, which consumed a great number of them. Scarcely was that fire quenched by the intercession of Moses, than Israel began to murmur anew, lamenting the flesh-pots, the melons, and the onions of Egypt. At the prayer of Moses, the Lord caused a wind to convey heaps of quails around their camp, of which they ate voraciously, and died in thousands. Then came Moses' family troubles, when Aaron and Miriam conspired against him, and which ended with their punishment and humiliation. It was in this same wilderness that the great rebellion of Israel against the Lord, on the occasion of the spies sent to Canaan, took place, when the irritated multitude sought to stone Caleb and Joshua, because they told them not to rebel against God, and when the Lord threatened them with a sudden and complete destruction, which only the intercession of Moses prevented. The Lord, however, "swore in his wrath," that none of those actively involved in the revolt should enter the land of promise, saying unto Moses, "Say unto them, as truly as I live, saith the Lord, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you. Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; all of you, . . . from twenty years old and upwards, which have murmured against me. Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun. But your little ones, whom ye said will be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised. . . . And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear (or suffer for) your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness. . . . I the Lord have said, and will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that have gathered together against me, in this wilderness, they shall be consumed, and there they shall die."* Thus the long winter began with dark clouds and tempests, and under its dreary atmosphere all the adult Israelites, who were upwards of twenty years of age at the revolt, were to descend to their graves, and make room for their children to occupy their place of honour as the Church

* Num. xiv. 28—35.

of God, as the beloved Bride of the Angel of the Covenant, of whose love and glory their predecessors proved unworthy. During that long and dreary winter the dark clouds were never pierced by a single ray of sunshine, and its melancholy monotony was only disturbed by new revolts as that of Korah, by new murmurings and punishments, by pestilence and fiery serpents. There occurred indeed during that time three manifestations of the glory of the Angel in the cloud, but these were in wrath, and not in love, and intended to protect Moses against the rebels, and to punish them, and strike them with awe;* but there was no new token of His love and new communion with them at the altar. It seems that from the time that awful sentence was pronounced against them, they were not allowed to offer sacrifices to the Lord, as no pardon could be obtained by those whose condemnation the Lord had pronounced by an oath, nor was any sin or peace-offering accepted from them. Hence the prophet said in the name of God, "Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?"† Though there can be no doubt that even of these many repented, and were converted and prepared for eternity (see Heb. iii., especially ver. 16), still in this life their condemnation to fall in the wilderness being irrevocable, a renewal of the covenant by sacrifices was impossible. Though the pillar of cloud stayed still with them for the sake of Moses and the young generation, and though during these thirty-eight years the Lord often appeared to Moses, still He proved to them that He was no more habitually in the midst of them as formerly; for when they repented of their revolt, and said, "We have sinned against the Lord; we will now go up and fight," &c., he warned them, saying, "Go not up, neither fight; for I am not among you, lest ye be smitten before your enemies." When, notwithstanding this warning, they went up to fight the Amorite mountaineers, they were chased by them as by bees, and many of them were destroyed at Seir.‡ Then they remained in complete inactivity, and, as the Psalmist said, "they consumed their days in vanity, and their years in trouble," partly at Kadesh, and partly in marches and counter-marches round Mount Seir.§ Thus Moses said, "And

* See Num. xvi. 19, xvii. 7, xx. 6.

† Deut. i. 41—45; comp. Num. xiv. 39—45.

‡ Amos v. 25.

§ Deut. i. 46, ii. 1.

the space in which we came from Kadesh-Barnea, until we passed over the brook Zered, was thirty and eight years ; until all the generation of the men of war were wasted out from among the host, as the Lord sware unto them. For, indeed, the hand of the Lord was against them, to destroy them from among the host, until they were consumed.”* Such was the fearful winter period which overtook Israel in the wilderness, because of their rebellion against God. We thus see why Solomon in this Song of divine love was obliged to pass over that dreary winter and begin again with the cheerful and beautiful spring that followed. It was not until the old murmuring rebels were all dead, and the Bride consisted of young, vigorous, obedient, and upright virgins, who had no part in the revolts, murmurings, and conspiracies of the fathers, that the winter suddenly disappeared, the black clouds of divine displeasure dispersed, and the blessed Angel of the Covenant again appeared in the midst of them, and thus addressed his Bride :

10. My Beloved spake, and said unto me,
Arise now, my love (or belo. comp.) my fair one,
And go thee hence ;
11. For, lo, the winter is past,
The rain is over and gone :
12. The young sprouts have appeared on the earth,
The pruning season hath arrived,
And the turtle’s voice is heard in our land.
13. The fig-tree perfumeth her green figs,
And the vines their tender grapes :
They send forth an odour ;
Arise now, my love (or belo. comp.), my fair one,
And go thee hence.

The contents of these four verses we find in sacred history largely and particularly described. Jehovah’s irrevocable sentence regarding the old rebel generation having been literally executed during the thirty-eight years of winter as we have described above, and the Bride, consisting now of the young and obedient generation, having removed from the winter quarters and passed the brook Zered, and encamped again at the river Arnon, there the beloved Bride-

* Deut. ii. 14, 15.

groom appeared again to her in all splendour and grace, and said to her; "Rise ye up, take your journey, and pass over the river Arnon: Behold, I have given into thine hand Sihon the Amorite, King of Heshbon, and his land: begin to possess it, and contend with him in battle. This day will I begin to put the dread of thee, and the fear of thee upon the nations that are under the whole heaven, who shall hear report of thee, and shall tremble, and be in anguish because of thee."* Then the Bride arose, following once more her Beloved. The passage of the river Arnon was a triumphant one. Victory after victory followed over Sihon and Og till all Gilead and Bashan were completely subdued. Surely we need advance no farther in the history in order to explain verses 10, 11, and 12. The long absent (or hidden) Bridegroom suddenly appeared, bounding again over mountains and hills, and the Bride heard once more his sweet and gracious voice, saying to her, "Arise now, my love, my fair one, and go thee hence; for, lo, the winter is past"—the long winter under whose gloomy atmosphere and cold blasts all the bitter plants have perished, has now passed away. "The rain" of God's wrath and indignation "is over and gone," having accomplished his threatenings and righteous judgments—"the young sprouts (or plants) have appeared on the earth"—the young, vigorous, and promising generation have sprung up, and are ready and well fitted for action—"the pruning season," for cutting off the wild and withered branches, the idolatrous and long doomed nations, "has arrived," their measure of wickedness has now reached its climax, and calls loud for wrath and judgment—"and the turtle's voice," the voice of the Lord's promise to Abraham, to give this land in possession to his children, a promise confirmed by an oath and covenant sacrifices, one of which was a turtle dove,† "is heard in our land"—the Lord had said unto Abraham, that only the fourth generation should return from Egypt into the land of Canaan, "for the iniquity of the Amorites is not

* Deut. ii. 24, 25.

† Among those Covenant sacrifices, which must have represented both covenanting parties, "the birds," the turtle and young pigeon, "Abraham divided not," as he did the other victims! This is worthy of remark, but mysterious in its nature. See the author's remarks on that awful Covenant made with Abraham, in his publication, entitled "A Christian Jew on the Old Testament Scriptures."

yet full," that promised generation now stands ready at the river Arnon, with their swords on their thigh, with the pruning knives in their hands, and the voice of the turtle is heard saying, "Arise, go forth and conquer according to my promise unto Abraham, my friend." The Angel of the Covenant is here made to say, "our land," for the land of promise was the land of Messiah and his Church.

No sooner had the Bride heard the gracious voice of her Beloved, and his order to advance, than she, courageously, passed the river Arnon and went forth conquering and to conquer. Sihon and Og, and all the kings of Gilead and Bashan, were discomfited before the Covenant Angel and his Bride, and their countries were taken possession of by Israel. The five kings of Midian, with their armies, were utterly destroyed by a detachment of Israel's army, only 12,000 strong, of which not one lost his life in the contest.* The terrified Balak King of Moab, and protector (or lord paramount) of Midian, sent for Balaam to curse Israel, but was told that the Lord "beheld no iniquity in Jacob . . . The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. . . . Surely there is no enchantment (possible) against Jacob. . . . But, according to this time (*i.e.*, according to their present exalted position in the favour of God), it shall be said to Jacob and Israel, What hath the Almighty God wrought? Behold the people shall rise up as a great lion . . . he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain. . . . The Almighty God brought them out of Egypt, the vibration (or spread) of his voice is like that of an unicorn; he shall devour the nations, his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows. . . . Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee."†

All this, however, was only Israel's spring, an advanced spring indeed, but only spring; for they had yet to cross the Jordan, and to work hard during the summer before they could reap the fruits of a promised rich harvest, as Moses told them before he left them; "For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the Lord your God giveth you. But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the Lord your God giveth you to inherit, . . . so that ye dwell in safety; then there

* Num. xxxi. 48—50. † Num. xxiii. 21—24, xxiv. 8, 9.

shall be a place which the Lord your God shall choose, to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all, . . . your offerings and sacrifices . . . which ye vow unto the Lord. And ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God, ye, and your sons, and your daughters," &c.* In order therefore to encourage the Bride for her remaining operations, the Bridegroom renews his invitation in verse 13, saying, "The fig-tree perfumeth her green figs, and the vines their tender grapes; they send forth an odour"—*i.e.*, behold the spring is far advanced, and hitherto all has passed on well with thee—thy spring began with glory and victory, and thou hast received many tokens of a magnificent summer and a rich harvest. No violent wind has come to shake off the abundant clusters of thy green figs or of thy tender grape, but they all begin to be overspread with their perfumed fresh garment, under which they shall swell and ripen—none of thy victories hitherto has been blasted by any repulse or loss, nor checked by any onslaught of thine enemies with their mighty armies, but everywhere thou hast been victorious, and thy sword irresistible, "Arise, then, my love (or beloved companion), my fair one, and go thee hence"—cross the river Jordan, enter the land of promise, fight vigorously against the idolatrous nations long doomed to destruction, conquer them and take their land in possession, according to the promise which I have made unto thy fathers. The following passages contain the substance of verse 13, if stripped of its figures—"Thine eyes have seen all that the Lord your God hath done unto these two kings (Sihon and Og): so shall the Lord do unto all the kingdoms whither thou passest. Ye shall not fear them; for the Lord your God he shall fight for you."† Again, "If thou shalt say in thine heart, these nations are more than I; how can I dispossess them? Thou shalt not be afraid of them; but shalt well remember what the Lord thy God did unto Pharaoh, and unto all Egypt. . . . And the signs, and the wonder, and the mighty hand, . . . whereby the Lord thy God brought thee out: so shall the Lord thy God do unto all the people of whom thou art afraid. . . . Thou shalt not be affrighted at them: for the Lord thy God is among you, a mighty God, and terrible."‡

* Deut. xii. 9—12.

† Deut. iii. 21, 22.

‡ Deut. vii. 17—23; see also viii. 2, 7, 9, xi. 22—25.

One thing of importance remains to be observed—viz., about the expression used by the Angel in verses 10 and 13, saying to his Bride, “Arise now . . . and go thee hence,” and not “Arise now . . . and let us go hence!” The reason of this is that after the death of Moses the visible pillar of cloud, with the Angel inhabiting it, disappeared and went no more before Israel’s camp. It was only with Moses that the Angel conversed freely “face to face as a man speaketh unto his friend,”* but Joshua was only to be answered by the medium of the Urim and Thummim (see the beautiful and very affecting passage of Num. xxvi. 12—23.) The last time of the Angel’s appearance in the tabernacle occurred a few days before the departure of Moses, and is recorded in the following passage, “And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, thy days approach that thou must die: call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tabernacle of the congregation, that I may give him a charge: And Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves in the tabernacle of the congregation. And the Lord appeared in the tabernacle in the pillar of cloud, and the pillar of cloud stood over the door of the tabernacle.”† This was the last manifestation of the Angel in the pillar of cloud. He went still, however, before Israel even after they had crossed the Jordan, and subdued their enemies,‡ but this was in an invisible manner, and no more in the pillar of cloud. When, in order to encourage Joshua, he appeared unto him before Jericho, it was no more in the cloud, and with his divine splendour, but as a mighty warrior with the naked sword in his hand. We thus see the reason why He tells her, “Arise now, my love, . . . and go *thee* hence,” because after the death of Moses, she was to march alone as it were, over Jordan; for though He was still to go before her invisibly, and fight her battles, she was no longer to see Him marching before her in the pillar of cloud. These lovely invitations must therefore be considered as the Angel’s farewell address to His Bride, from whose eyes He was now to be hid until we shall see Him reappear in all His glory in the cloud, in Solomon’s temple. Hence He proceeds to give her direction in the next verse, and to tell her how to conduct herself during his absence.

* Exod. xxxiii. 9—11; Num. xii. 6—8; Deut. xxxiv. 10.

† Deut. xxxi. 14, 15. ‡ Exod. xxxii. 2—14; Deut. vii. 21, xxxi. 3.

14. O my dove, in the clefts of the rock—
 In the secret places of the precipices—
 Let me see thy countenance,
 Let me hear thy voice ;
 For thy voice is sweet,
 And thy countenance comely.

The covenant Angel, the divine Bridegroom, who had hitherto marched before His Church and Bride in a visible pillar of cloud, was now to disappear for a time from her sight, but in His farewell address, He reminds her to behold Him continually with the eyes of faith—to remember that, though invisible, He would still be ever present with her—that she should therefore at all times, but especially in all the difficulties, dangers, and perplexity of the warfare, present herself before Him in humble, ardent, and believing prayer; and that thus she would be sure to find grace in His sight, and succour in all circumstances. In chap. i. v. 15, after the humble confession of the Bride—after having acknowledged her own unworthiness, renounced all merit on her part, and protested that the Bridegroom was all in all to her, He exclaimed—“Behold (now) thou art beautiful, O my love! Thou art beautiful with eyes like doves,” indicating her humility, faithfulness, loveliness, constancy, and chastity. Now as He was to leave her for a while, as to His visible appearance in the cloud, He says—“O my dove”—O my lovely, humble, chaste, and faithful companion—“in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the precipices, let me see thy countenance,” &c. This reminds us of Moses, when, in behalf of Israel, he requested the Lord to shew him the glory of the angel whom he was to send with them; and the Lord said: “Thou canst not see my face; for no man can see me and live (or, ‘while he is yet alive,’ *i.e.* in the flesh); and the Lord said Behold there is a place by me (*i.e.* appointed by me) and thou shalt stand upon the rock; and it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee into the cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by; and I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts (the angel in the cloud), but my face cannot be seen.”*†

* Exod. xxxiii. 20–23.

† The words *הִנֵּה מַקוֹמִי אֵתִי* (Hinneh makom itti) literally signify,

The same blessed Angel, whose glory in part was then shown unto Moses, and whose attributes were proclaimed before him, that Israel might know the divine qualities of her Beloved, now demands His beloved Bride, who was no longer to see Him riding in the visible cloud through the wilderness by His name Jah, to make Him in turn see *her* countenance, *her* faithfulness, attachment, and love, and *her* voice of confession, praise, and supplication, at all times ; but especially when she found herself "in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of precipices," in difficulties and dangers, in the presence of mighty enemies, in times of persecution and oppression. And here it is proper for us to remember that what the Bride could not foresee the Angel did. If she thought that these "clefts of rocks and secret places of precipices" referred only to those mountains, clefts, and precipices of the land of Judah where she would have to fight her enemies, the Angel looked farther and saw the dismal period when, on account of her sins and backslidings, she would be delivered into the hands of her enemies, and seek those clefts and precipices as hiding places in order to escape the swords of her pursuers, as we read : "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord ; and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years. And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel ; and because of the Midianites the children of Israel made for themselves the dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strongholds."* The Angel having foreseen all this, and fearing lest she would despair under such heavy affliction, tells her that whenever she should call on Him, even from these dreary clefts, from these hiding places, He would always be gracious to her ; for in that penitent and supplicating state she would always appear unto Him lovely, and her voice of prayer would always be sweet unto Him. The substance of this verse we find largely detailed at the Angel's last appearance to Moses in the pillar

"Behold here the place with me," and are easily explained when we consider that Moses must have stood on the declivity of Mount Sinai, and the Lord in the cloud higher up, at some distance from him, and that the rock with the cleft was situated near to the place where the cloud stood. See the author's observations on this passage in his "Christian Jew on the Old Testament Scriptures."

* Judg. vi. 1, 2 ; comp. 6, 7 ; ii. 11—23 ; iii. 7, 8, 12, 15 ; iv. v.

of cloud: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, and this people will rise up and go a whoring after the strange gods of the land whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me and break my covenant which I have made with them. Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and will hide my face from them, and they will be devoured, and many evils and troubles will befall them; then they will say in that day, are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us. . . . Now, therefore, write ye out this song (*i.e.* the last song of Moses) for you, and teach it to the children of Israel; putting it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel."* Here we see them forewarned by the Angel, of the "clefts of the rocks," and of the "secret places of the precipices" in which they would find themselves because of their sins; and the song of Moses was intended as a witness against them, and at the same time to keep them from despair, and make them cry unto the Angel for help. But the Angel also foresaw that the chief cause of Israel's fall and sufferings would be their disobedience to His command to exterminate utterly the doomed idolatrous nations, because, mingling with them, they would be led astray by them. He therefore repeats once more that injunction before leaving.

15. Catch for us the jackals—

The little jackals that spoil the vines;
For our vines have tender grapes.

"Catch for us," in plural! It is the same in chap. i. 11, "Reins of gold we will make for thee" (see exposition there.) These belong to those wonderful passages in the Old Testament Scriptures in which the Holy Spirit, speaking by the mouth of the "holy men of God," indicates the united action of the ever-blessed Father, Son, and Spirit in the works of creation, redemption, conversion, and sanctification. In the creation of man we are told, "And God said, let us make man in our image," &c. The eternal Father sent forth the "Word by whom all things were

* Deut. xxxi. 16—19.

made," and the Spirit gave animation and life, "and man became a living soul." When fallen humanity meditated revolt in the plain of Shinar, which would have ended in their utter ruin, the Lord said, "Let us go down and there confound their language," &c. In our Song, chap. i. 11, where an act of the sustaining and restraining grace of the Lord towards His Church is recorded, the Holy Spirit, dictating to the sacred poet, made him say in the name of the divine Bridegroom, "Reins of gold we will make for thee," &c., which means, "I will lead and guide thee in all thy ways by my Spirit, by rules, laws, and statutes, that thy feet be preserved from stumbling." The Lord who drew her to Messiah, her beloved covenant Angel, by the "cords of love," did so by the influence of the Holy Spirit who, in the language of the prophet, "led Israel as a beast going down into a valley;" and the blessed Bridegroom himself went before her in the pillar of cloud, to guide and protect her and lead her to rest.

In this verse the Bridegroom is made to say to his mortal Bride: "Catch for us the jackals, the little jackals that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes." "The vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel," says the most eloquent of the prophets. The Psalmist says: "A vine hast thou brought forth out of Egypt, thou hast cast out the heathen and planted it." And why did He do all this? Because He promised that land to Abraham and his seed for an everlasting possession, and confirmed the promise by an oath; and because the idolatry, iniquities, and abominations committed by the Canaanites had now reached their full measure, and their doom was irrevocably sealed by heaven's sentence. To exterminate those enemies of God, those allies of Satan, was now the work assigned to Israel by the Lord God of the whole earth. In this war Israel was not only a weapon in the hand of a provoked God, but also the chosen and honoured plant which was to be planted in the place of the idolaters, in order to produce fruits for the Lord's honour and praise; as Jeremiah elegantly describes it on another occasion: "The portion of Jacob is not like them (like the heathen); for he is the former of all things; and Israel is the rod of his inheritance. The Lord of Hosts is his name. Thou art my battle-axe and weapons of war: for with thee will I break in pieces the

nations; and with thee I will destroy kingdoms.”* In order to accomplish the planting of the seed of Abraham in the land of promise, the jackals,† the abominable idolaters of Canaan had first to be expelled or destroyed, that the vineyard might be freed from all danger of being destroyed by them. These Canaanites are also styled here “little jackals,” in contempt, and to indicate to Israel that they would have no excuse in saying that they were too strong for them to drive away. So Joshua and Caleb once said to the frightened Israelites regarding these Canaanites, “Only rebel ye not against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are like our bread,” (*i.e.*, we shall easily devour them, and as the heathen prophet said of Israel’s God, “He shall eat up the nations his enemies,”‡)—“their defence (literally “their shadow”) is departed from them, and the Lord is with us; fear them not.”§

With regard to the danger to which Israel, the vineyard of the Lord, was exposed from those Canaanitish jackals, we must remember that even as far back as the days of Isaac and Rebekah, the daughters of Canaan were so fearfully corrupt and wicked that Rebekah said unto Isaac: “I am weary of my life, because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth such as these which are of the daughters of the land (*i.e.*, of the common specimen) what good shall my life do me?”|| And if it was so at that time when “the iniquity of the Canaanites was not yet full,” what must it have been when it reached the climax? Therefore the Lord often warned Israel of the danger to which they would expose themselves if they would mingle with them, and not completely extirpate them out of the land. We select the following passage as one of the strongest: “When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations

* Jeremiah li. 19, 20.

† These animals, which exist in great multitudes in the East, prove very destructive to the gardens and fields, and especially so to the vineyards. Being very fond of green grapes, in picking them they often break the vines in their robbery. This we have often seen in this country (Algeria). Hence it is an emphatic figure thus to personify the Canaanites, who ultimately, like a flock of jackals, spoiled the vineyard of God, in having led Israel astray from him.

‡ Num. xxiv. 8, comp. Deut. vii. 16.

§ Num. xiv. 9, comp. Deut. vii. 12, 26.

|| Gen. xxvii. 46, comp. xxviii. 1–9, Esau’s imitation.

before thee, the Hittites and the Girgashites, the Amorites and the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou : And when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee, thou shalt smite them and utterly destroy them ; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them : Neither shalt thou make marriages with them ; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son : for they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods : so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy you suddenly. But thus shall ye deal with them, ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their statues, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire : For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God : The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth," &c.* Here, then, we have a large explanation of our verse, and the Lord's injunctions to Israel to destroy and drive away all the jackals of Canaan, that they might not destroy the garden of God. When the Lord said, "Catch for us the jackals," it is enjoined that Israel should become the executioner of the righteous judgment of the Godhead, and it is implied that, by so doing the Lord's will, she will promote her own advantage ; for had she destroyed these dangerous jackals she would have been preserved unhurt, undefiled, and prosperous, and the Lord would have reaped the fruit of His vineyard. The reason added to his injunction at the end of the verse is, "For our vines have tender grapes," that is to say, the corruption and allurements of these idolaters are great and strong, and you are too young, weak, and inexperienced to withstand them, if you remain in the midst of them. How far Israel's future justified these fears and warnings, sacred history abundantly shows us, and we shall soon see it in this very song.

Now let us keep in mind that in verse 8 of this chapter the Bride began to speak ; that in verses 8 and 9 she related the manner in which her Bridegroom appeared unto her at different times, and manifested his glory and love ; that from verse 10 to 15 inclusive she relates the Angel's farewell to

* Deut. vii. 1-6, see the whole chap.

her at the end of her journey through the wilderness; the encouragement given her to enter Canaan without fear; the promise He made her to be ever near to her in time of trouble and danger, if she should call on His name and supplicate His aid; and then His advice and warning regarding her conduct during His temporary absence. In the last two verses of the chapter she tells us her resignation at that crisis, her determination to remain faithfully attached to her beloved Lord and divine Master during His absence, and also her answer to His farewell address.

16. My Beloved is mine, and I am His,
Who feedeth among the lilies.
17. Until the day break, and the shades flee away,
Turn round about (me), O my Beloved,
And be Thou like a roe, or a young hart,
Upon the mountains of Bether (or, "division.")

Many and various were the vicissitudes which the Church of God experienced in the wilderness from her departure out of Egypt to her encampment before the river Jordan. She had many opportunities amid these vicissitudes of convincing herself of the constancy, faithfulness, and unchangeableness of the love and affection of her divine Bridegroom, notwithstanding her own imperfections, fluctuations, and forgetfulness. Of these facts she was emphatically and repeatedly reminded by Moses before his departure.* Now that Moses was to depart from her, and with him the pillar of cloud, and the visible presence of her Beloved, for an indefinite period, she gathers courage and says: "My Beloved is mine, and I am His," or more literally, "My Beloved is for me, and I am for Him," *i.e.*, whatever may be the reason of His withdrawing His visible presence and the pillar of cloud at this peculiar juncture, however long the absence of the night-illuminating Light of the cloud may be, still I am resigned to His holy will, knowing that though visibly absent, yet invisibly "His left hand will still be under my head, and with His right hand He will embrace me,"—that as He chose me from among all nations and tongues, and espoused me to be His, and confirmed His choice by promise and oath and

* See Deut. iv. 32–40, vii. 6–9, x. 12–22, xxvi. 17–19.

covenant alliance, so He is and shall be mine for ever, and I am His; and whatever time may elapse before His return, before His reappearance in His glory and majesty in His sanctuary, we shall wait for each other patiently and faithfully. "I am His, who feedeth among the lilies."—At the beginning of this chapter the Bride compared herself to the lilies of the valleys, and the Bridegroom compared her to lilies among thorns. In verse 9, she compared her Beloved to a roe leaping over mountains, bounding over hills, because of the rapidity of His disappearance and reappearance in different places, now standing behind (or within) her wall, looking out from the apertures, and shining as the brightness of the firmament, and a little after disappearing from the tabernacle and camp, and standing on some craggy mountain cliff indicating to His Bride to follow Him. But notwithstanding all these sudden movements, He was always in the midst of His Church leading, feeding, protecting, and bearing His lambs among the lilies. Therefore she compares Him here again to a roe feeding among the lilies, and although sometimes entirely out of view when the lilies are so high as to cover him, again reappearing when reaching some eminence or some place of low foliage, where his lovely head and sparkling eyes are seen from a great distance; and though soon disappearing again he is still known to be there. So she comforted herself that even during the indicated period of His absence He would often make His appearance among the lilies,—manifest His presence in the midst of His Church from time to time, to show her that though invisible He is not far off. And so it really happened. He appeared to Joshua before Jericho, to show him that though no more in the visible pillar of cloud, He was still among the lilies, in the midst of His Church, to defend her against the thorns by which she was surrounded; and so in the times of the Judges He appeared to Gideon, Manoah, &c.

Having thus expressed her resignation, and promised to wait with faith and patience for the return of her Beloved, whose she was by an everlasting covenant, she with the same courage and resignation takes in turn her farewell of Him, saying, "Until the day break (or, 'until the day breathe,' referring to the breeze of dawn), and the shades flee away." Until the mysterious intervening night that is to come be at an end,—until the hard struggles of war, and the predicted

backslidings, and all the shadows of mystery which cover these future events,* have passed away, and until the gentle refreshing breeze indicating the dawn of the bright day of Thy reappearance shall arrive, "O turn round about" (or "continue Thy circuits"†)---make invisibly Thy rounds and visits in and round about my camp. "And be Thou like a roe, or a young hart on the mountains of Bether." As "Bether" signifies "divisions,"‡ it is evident that by the mountains of Bether is meant the two ranges of mountains which are separated from each other by the river Jordan and its valley; so we see in 2 Sam. ii. 29 that the mountain chain beyond Jordan was called "Bithron," or the little Bether, as we say, "the little and great Atlas," which, too, are separated by a valley. The meaning, therefore, of this phrase is, that as the Bride was now standing at the river Jordan, ready to cross it, and to fight her way into Canaan over these mountains of Bether, she entreats her Beloved, whom in verse 8 she described as "leaping over mountains, bounding over hills," while leading her through the desert, to continue, still to be with her, though invisibly, to go with her over the river Jordan, to accompany her when crossing the mountains of Bether,—that according to His own demand, she might be able to "shew Him her countenance, to make Him hear her voice" of praise and supplications, when, "in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the precipices," fighting her way against the combined armies of the inhabitants of those mountains, so that He might always be near to hear her complaint and prayer, to see her danger and trouble and deliver her, and that in the event of her being delivered into the power of her enemies, because of her transgressions, and being obliged to hide herself in those clefts and precipices of the mountains of Bether, He might come according to His promise, "leaping on the mountains, and bounding on the hills," to rescue and deliver her, as soon as she repents and supplicates Him.

Having now seen the meaning of the last eight verses of

* See Deut. xxxi. 16—18, and the famous song that follows.

† See 1 Sam. vii. 16, and Eccl. i. 6, where סב (Sov, or Sav) signifies to make circuits, go round about; see note of chap. i. 12.

‡ See Gen. xv. 10; Jer. xxxiv. 18, 19.

this chapter,—having discovered in it the Angel's farewell address to His Bride before removing with the visible pillar of cloud from her camp, and His invitations, warnings, encouragements, and directions to her, that she might know how to conduct herself during His temporary absence, and also her resignation, and the answer she addressed to Him, and the prayers she offered on that solemn occasion,—let us now cast a passing glance at that part of Israel's history which contains the fulfilment of the Angel's engagements and promises. As soon as the Bride had crossed the river Jordan, and stood before the city of Jericho, which was surrounded by a high wall and shut up with gates and bars of iron, the Covenant Angel appeared to Joshua in the character of a mighty warrior, with a naked sword in his hand, saying, "As Captain (or Prince) of Jehovah's hosts have I now come,"* *i.e.*, according to my promise to my Bride that though I come no longer visibly in the pillar of cloud, still I would be with and near her. And the miraculous manner in which that fortress fell showed that it was the divine Bridegroom who took it by the word of his omnipotence, and not the mortal Bride by her sword. When His dove, His beloved Bride, found herself in the "clefts of the rock," among the craggy "precipices of the mountains of Bether," at the precipitous descent called Beth Horon, engaged in an unequal struggle with the united armies of many kings, and when she made Him hear her sweet voice of prayer, He caused a shower of large stones to fall from heaven upon her enemies, and thus destroyed more of them than she did by her sword. When Joshua, her captain and guide, saw the night approaching, and remembered that they had no more the luminous pillar of fire to give them light by night, and still anxious to pursue all the advantages of his victory, "he spake to the Lord in the sight of Israel, saying, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou moon over the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. . . . And there was no day like that, before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man, for the Lord fought for Israel."†

Such were the glorious manifestations of the invisibly

* Josh. v. 13, 15.

† Josh. x. 11—14.

present Bridegroom on the mountains of Bethel. When "He went forth for the salvation of His people," He fought Israel's battles, He was their light, their sun and moon, "the shield of their help, the sword of their excellency." As long as His Bride remained faithful to Him, according to her promise—as long as "Israel dwelt in safety alone," and "was not counted" (not mixed) among the heathen nations, then all other nations were obliged to say, "Happy art thou, O Israel, who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord!" When Joshua had finished his wars with the principal nations of Canaan, "the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there, and the land was subdued before them."* It was there before the Lord, and according to instructions received from Him through the holy oracle Urim and Thummin that the land was divided among the tribes. Though small portions, here and there, in the territories of different tribes, were still inhabited by Canaanites which had to be driven out, they were so few and so divided that it required no longer the combined efforts of the whole army, but every tribe was left to guard the portion of the Lord's garden against the common enemy—to catch or chase away these jackals from their territories, and not allow them to destroy the tender grapes of the Lord's vineyard. When Joshua the son of Nun was approaching towards the end of his pilgrimage, and Israel still enjoyed profound and undisturbed peace, he often repeated to them the warnings and exhortations of Moses regarding the danger to which they were yet exposed from the remnants of the idolatrous nations of Canaan. Having gathered together all Israel, their elders and princes, judges and officers, he rehearsed to them all the wonderful ways of the Lord towards them, and warned and entreated them to continue faithful to His covenant, and especially to keep themselves clean from the idolatry of the Canaanites.† After this he proceeded to renew and confirm the covenant between the Lord and His people; and when all the tribes under their princes and elders ranged themselves before the Lord (*i.e.*, before the tabernacle which was erected at Shiloh)‡ Joshua

* Jos. xviii. 1.

† See Jos. xxiii.

‡ We think it proper to remark here that Shiloh, having been situated in the district of Shechem and in its vicinity, the locality in which

recounted unto the Bride her history and origin, and all the wonders of love which the Lord had shewed her from her coming forth out of Egypt to that solemn day. Then he invited her seriously to consider and decide about her choice for the future, whether she would continue to serve the great God her Deliverer, or the gods of Terah, or those of the Canaanites, "and the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forget the Lord to serve other gods," and after having themselves repeated all the bounties and loving kindnesses of the Lord towards them, they added, "Therefore will we also serve the Lord; for he is our God. And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the Lord: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. . . . And the people said unto Joshua, Nay, but we will serve the Lord," and thus, after repeated protestations, the Bride was allowed to renew and confirm the covenant with her God. She remained faithful during all the life of Joshua and the elders who were trained under him and Moses, but then the predicted night, the gloomy and dreary night arrived, as we shall see in the beginning of next chapter.

this general gathering of the multitudes of Israel took place is therefore called *Shechem*, chap. xxiv. 1—25, after the name of the capital of that district. This is evident from the fact that in verse 1 it is said that the tribes presented themselves "before the Lord;" and in verse 26 we read, "And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone, and set it up there (mark *there*, *i.e.*, at *Shechem*), under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord." It being certain that the sanctuary of the Lord was nowhere else at that time but at Shiloh (see Jos. xviii. 1, 8, 9, xix. 51, xxii. 9—12), and that all important transactions took place there, Shiloh, as we said above, must have passed here under the name of its territorial metropolis *Shechem*.

CHAPTER III.

THE LONG NIGHT IN THE TIME OF THE JUDGES.

ARGUMENT OF THE FIRST FIVE VERSES OF CHAP. III., WHICH BELONG TO THE SECOND PART OF THE SONG.

(Vv. 1, 2.) Israel seeks ardently their absent Lord during the long and dreary night of the period of the Judges, but cannot find him, not in "the city," nor in "the streets," nor in the "broadways"—*i.e.*, they cannot find him in the tabernacle, nor by the Urim, through the priests, nor was there any prophet to convey his messages, nor any direct manifestations from him. (V. 3.) Israel seeks the Lord in the days of Samuel, takes directions from him, as well as from the itinerant prophets of his school. (V. 4.) By these directions Israel soon found her Lord in the days of David, and brought his holy Ark of the Covenant from Kirjath Jearim to Mount Zion with shouts of triumph and joy, and placed it in the temporary tent which David had prepared there. (V. 5.) Israel again, afraid of rivals, conjures the other nations not to disturb that love until the last seal of perfection had been put to it. Here ends the second part of the Song.

THE CHURCH.

1. On my couch during the nights,
I sought Him whom my soul loveth;
I sought Him, but I found Him not.

This exceedingly touching relation of the Bride regarding her sufferings during the night (or rather "nights," as she calls it) of the absence of her Beloved, is largely and circumstantially illustrated in sacred history. The Bridegroom, who sees the end from the beginning, told her, in clear terms, what would happen to her during His temporary absence, that she would not only leave many jackals, many idolatrous Canaanites in the garden of God, but that she would soon be led astray by them after their strange gods, and break her covenant with her Beloved—that His wrath would be kindled against her, and that He would forsake her, and hide His face from her for a time, and when many evils and troubles had in consequence befallen her, she would then say: "are not these evils come upon me because my God is not with me?" Like Simon Barjonah of the new covenant, the Bride could not believe that she would ever be obliged to shed bitter tears of repentance, for having, as

he did, denied the Lord and Saviour thrice in one night. But as the hand-writing in Balshazzar's palace was fulfilled that very night, as the reality of Nebuchadnezzar's dream "came upon him" in all its details, so Israel found themselves enveloped in the darkness of the dreary night, which the Angel in the cloud predicted at His last appearance to Moses in the tabernacle.

With the death of Joshua, the sun of Israel's summer began to decline, and the shades of evening to gather and become thicker until perfect night covered them. Though in the first two verses of the book of Judges we are told that immediately after Joshua's death the Lord answered Israel by the Urim and Thummin, we have in the same chapter the melancholy account of the many territories, cities, and districts, in which Israel allowed the doomed jackals to abide in the midst of them, and which proved the source of all their subsequent calamities. In the 2d chapter of Judges we read: "And an angel of the Lord," (or, "the angel Jehovah)," came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you into the land which I swore unto your fathers; and I said I will never break my covenant with you. And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars; but ye have not obeyed my voice; why have ye done this? I therefore say now, I will not drive them out from before you, but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you. And it came to pass, when the Angel of the Lord (or the Angel Jehovah) spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice and wept. And they called the name of that place Bochim (Weepings), and sacrificed there unto the Lord."* Whatever be the form in which the Angel appeared to Israel on that occasion, whatever be the way in which He convoked that General Assembly of the whole nation in order to address them in this manner, there cannot be the least doubt that he was the Angel of the Covenant, for His name is "Angel Jehovah," and in His address He does not say, "Thus says the Lord," but all along He speaks in His own name, "I brought you out of Egypt. . . . I brought you into this land. . . .

* Judges ii. 1-5,

I swear unto your fathers . . . *I said, I will never break my covenant with you,* . . . and at last, "I will not drive them out from before you," which is equivalent to saying, "I will no more be with you, nor in the midst of you," and thus the beginning of the predicted night was declared by the provoked Bridegroom Himself. Here then we have the first explanation of the meaning of the Bride's complaint when she says: "On my couch during the night, I sought Him whom my soul loveth; I sought Him but I found Him not." At the rebuke administered to her by the provoked Angel of the Covenant, the backsliding Bride, who lay careless, as it were, on the couch of neglect and forgetfulness, began to weep, and to endeavour to appease her Beloved by sacrifices, but she found Him not. He departed from her after telling her the reason of His anger, and left her to mourn at the altar of her useless sacrifices. Her transgression had already reached beyond admonition, and demanded correction. Her wounds were already too deep for being healed by slight remedies and required to be cut. And cut they were, and often with great severity, as we read in the same chapter, "And Israel forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth. And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. Whithersoever they went out the hand of the Lord was against them for evil, as the Lord had said, and as the Lord had sworn unto them; and they were greatly distressed."* Indeed, even during the dark nights of Israel's sufferings from Cushan-Rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia, Eglon, king of Moab, Jabin, king of Hazor, the Philistines, and Canaanites, &c., there appeared to them from time to time some brilliant stars, as Othniel, Ehud, Barak, Deborah, Shangar, and others, but there was no sun; the Lord was not in the midst of them; and as soon as the stars went down complete darkness reigned, and Israel, lying on her couch of backsliding, prostrate, and helpless, sought the Lord but found Him not.

A striking illustration of the thickness of this darkness,

* Jud. ii. 13-15.

and of the way in which the mourning and oppressed Bride knew her malady and its cause, is to be found in the beginning of Gideon's history. Israel being oppressed and crushed by Midian, Amalek, and the combined nations of the East, felt the iron yoke so fearfully that they crept into the dens and caves of the mountains for refuge; but in these secret places of the precipices, in these clefts of the rock, the Bride weeps and mourns, and the Bridegroom, according to His promise, at last hears her voice. The valiant son of Joash was thrashing wheat in a cave (which served as a winepress during the vintage), and hiding himself from the rapacious Midianites. The long-absent Covenant-Angel* appeared to him under the oak which covered the entrance of the cave and said unto him: "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour." This was to indicate that though the night of His absence from the nation in general, who would seek Him but not find Him, was still to continue for a long time, yet still He was pleased to appear unto one of her sons "in the clefts of the rock," and work out by him a temporary deliverance, a season of respite, a short breathing hour for His weary Bride, in order that she might not faint altogether under the awful burden of her afflictions. Hence He said to young Gideon, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour." But the trembling and astonished young man replied, "O my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? but now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites."† This answer of Gideon clearly amounts to this, "Ah, if the almighty Angel of our Covenant who led us out of Egypt and through the wilderness, in the pillar of cloud, had now been with us, all these calamities could not have befallen us, but alas, He is absent and far away from us; it is night, dark gloomy night; we are covered with darkness; we seek Him, but find Him not,—how then sayest thou that our Lord is with us?" "And the Lord looked upon him and said, Go in this thy might"—or, "go in the strength of this thine own confession" (*i.e.*, that with the Lord who is

* That he was none else see Judges vi. 14, 16, 23, 25, where he is called "Jehovah."

† Judg. vi. 13.

mighty to save, Israel would be delivered from all his oppressors)—“and thou shalt save Israel from the hands of the Midianites. Do I not send thee?”*—*i.e.*, seeing that thou knowest that Israel’s strength, victory, and glory depend on my presence, and that all calamities are caused by my absence, therefore take courage, for it is I, the very Angel of the Covenant, who send thee, and through me thou shalt overthrow thy nation’s enemies, for though I am not in the midst of you, because of your sins, I am come to deliver you from your present afflictions, to give you time for humiliation and repentance. We know all that followed this wonderful interview, the condescending love of the Lord in strengthening Gideon by tokens and signs, and in giving to Israel a great victory over their enemies, not by their swords, but by His own invisible power, confounding the mighty army of their enemies, so that they destroyed each other, and left Israel free from their oppression. But this deliverance was only like the feeble light which emanates from a passing star that speedily passes away. The night soon became as dark as ever, and the afflicted Bride sought Him whom her soul loved, but found Him not.

Now, if we consider the first verse of this chapter in connection with the above illustration, from Israel’s history at the time of the Judges, we find in it a very striking resemblance to the language of the Psalmist, when he said, “I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice, and he gave ear to me. In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord; my sore run in the night, and ceased not” (or “mine arm was spread forth by night without ceasing,”)† “my soul refused to be comforted. I remembered God, and was troubled; I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Thou holdest mine eyes waking; I am so troubled that I cannot speak; I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times; I call to remembrance my song in the night; I commune with mine own heart, and my spirit made diligent search. Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? does his promise fail for ever more? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?”‡

* Judg. vi. 14.

† See the author’s translation and exposition of that Psalm.

‡ Ps. lxxvii. 1--9.

If the first verse of this chapter contains the sentiments of the first part of the Psalm quoted, we shall soon see how wonderfully the second part of it explains the next verse of the Song.

2. [I said] Let me now rise,
 And go about the city,
 In the streets and in the broad ways,
 And seek Him whom my soul loveth,
 I sought Him, but I found Him not.

This resolution of the desolate Bride during the night of her Beloved's absence, we find also largely explained in sacred history. "And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord . . . and forsook the Lord, and served him not. And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the children of Ammon. . . Moreover the children of Ammon passed over Jordan to fight also against Judah, and against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim: so that Israel was sore distressed. And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, saying, We have sinned against thee, both, because we have forsaken our God and also served Baalim. And the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Did not I deliver you from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites, from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines? . . . Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods; wherefore I will deliver you no more. . . . But the children of Israel said unto the Lord, We have sinned; do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee, only deliver us, we pray thee, this day. And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the Lord: and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel."* Here we see how the Bride rose up from her couch of indifference, idolatry, and misery, and resolved to abandon her idols and seek the Lord. While in the very act of doing so she found relief and deliverance; for Jephthah overthrew the Ammonites with great slaughter, and procured peace to her for a while. But did she then find the Lord perma-

* Judges x. 6-16.

nently? No, this was another passing star, which soon disappeared and left the night as gloomy as ever. Another star made its appearance in Samson, but this also soon went down and the night remained. There was, however, this great difference, that the Bride was now not only awake and thinking on her couch, of the past mercies of her Lord, and asking herself the questions of the Psalmist in the Psalm just quoted, "Will the Lord cast down for ever? Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" but she resolutely abandoned her couch; and knowing that the night was brought on by her own sin, she resolved not to lie down again, but to go about the streets and the broad places of the city, and seriously examine herself and cry aloud in prayer for her Lord until she found him. And here we compare some expressions of the second part of the same Psalm, where after all her musings, and doubts, and disencouragements, that troubled soul is made to say further, "Then I said, This is my infirmity, but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High," or rather, "Then I said, I failed sore; surely this change was effected by the right hand of the Most High." The soul coming to herself remembers that her doubts and fears are produced no less by her own faults and by her want of faith, than her present sufferings and change of fortune were produced by her sins. Then she begins to abandon these doubts and fears, and says, "I will remember the works of the Lord, surely I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate on all thy works, and talk of thy doings. Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary, who is so great a God as our God?"* Such exactly was the decision and resolution of the awakened Bride of our Song. She now resolved to muse, and doubt, and speculate no more, but to go about and work and earnestly seek the Lord, in the faith that he was the same wonderworking and gracious God as he had been in the days of old, and that all that seek Him will find Him.

The very distressing history of Israel's civil wars against the tribe of Benjamin furnishes us with another proof of the Bride's firm resolution at that time to seek the Lord perseveringly. Informed of the shocking murder committed by the inhabitants of Gibeon on the concubine of the Levite, and its

* Ps. lxxvii. 10—13, see the following verses.

fearfully aggravated circumstances, all the children of Israel, from Dan to Beershebah, and all those beyond the Jordan, gathered together as one man unto the Lord in Mizpah. When the tribe of Benjamin refused to deliver the murderer for judgment, Israel sent a deputation to Beth-el (*i.e.*, to the house of God which was at Shiloh), to ask the Lord by the Urim and Thummim which of the tribes should commence the war against Benjamin? The Lord answered simply, "Judah," but promised no victory. The fearful consequences shewed what the Lord meant by his silence beyond the simple mention of the name of "Judah." It was to humble that tribe which was regarded with respect and honour by all the rest, and to shew it, that the Lord's displeasure was not yet removed from the nation because of her past iniquities. Judah, therefore, on the first attack lost twenty and two thousand men. But Israel, instead of being irritated and discouraged, were only humbled, and went to Beth-el, and wept before the Lord the whole day, and inquired if they should all go to war against Benjamin? The Lord's answer was again simply, "Go up." After having lost other 18,000 men, we are told, "Then all the children of Israel and all the people went up, and came unto the house of God, and wept, and sat there before the Lord, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings before the Lord. And the children of Israel inquired of the Lord . . . saying, Shall I yet again go up to battle against the children of Benjamin, or shall I cease? And the Lord said, Go up; for to-morrow I will deliver them into thine hand."* This history is very remarkable, and shews that Israel as a nation had gained much from the severe lessons which she received during the dark night. There certainly was a conviction and humiliation and a strong resolution to seek the Lord, if after two such defeats, instead of returning every one to his own house and leaving the horrid crime unpunished, they acknowledged the justice of their punishment from the hand of a righteous God, and resolved to continue to humble themselves before him by fasting, supplications, and sacrifices, knowing that He must desire the punishment of such an awful crime, and that His design by their defeats was to shew them their own sinfulness.

* Judges xx. 26—28.

So the Lord pitied them at last and answered them with a decided promise of victory, which was verified by a fearful judgment on the guilty tribe which was almost destroyed. But nevertheless the Bridegroom was still absent, the night still dark; and the mourning Bride still continued to seek Him whom her soul loved, but found Him not.

3. The watchmen found me,
 Even those (watchmen) that go about the city;
 Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth?

By the "Watchmen that go about the city," we think that the prophets and other servants of God invested with divine authority, as were many of the judges, princes, and priests, are without doubt intended. This is evident, in the first place, from Isaiah, who says in the name of the Lord, "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, who shall never hold their peace day nor night; O ye that make mention of the Lord (or rather as the margin reads 'O ye that are the Lord's remembrancers') keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."* And in the second place, we have in the fifth chapter of this Song the very same watchmen introduced, where they are also called "the keepers of the walls," and where we shall see that those prophets are meant who repeatedly and severely rebuked Israel for their sins, and foretold the fearful judgments and chastisement to be poured upon them by a provoked God. We have, therefore, to go no farther for the meaning of the "watchmen" in our verse; for they were no other than Samuel and his school of prophets. The only thing that remains for us to shew is, that in the days of that prophet the Bride made diligent search for her Beloved, inquiring at the watchmen about Him, but that she found Him not—though in his day the night was far spent, and his appearance, like the morning star, indicated the approach of day. And here we must keep in mind that at the very beginning of the official administration of that Nazarite prophet, the greatest calamities overtook Israel, in the capture of the Ark of the Covenant by the Philistines, in the massacre of

* Is lxi 6 7.

the priests and Levites, in the death of Eli the venerable high-priest, and in the ultimate complete destruction of Shiloh, the place where the ark had remained since the days of Joshua. At the death of that prophet also a thick cloud of darkness and misery still hung over the nation—for their king Saul had become a monster of wickedness and cruelty—the Philistines, their deadly enemies, had gained the complete mastery over them, and David, the newly anointed servant of the Lord, had been pursued hard by Saul and driven into dens and caverns in the wilderness. All these melancholy events, though deplorable in themselves and dark looking at the time, were indeed so many mysterious preparations for the coming day, as we shall soon see; still Israel could not say at that time that she found Him whom her soul loved, nor could she say that her search then proved in vain, as it did during the former part of the long night. All that Solomon, therefore, made her say regarding that period is, that she met the watchmen and asked them—"Watchmen, what shall become of the night?" "Have ye seen Him whom my soul loveth?" That she did so—that she asked Samuel for her Beloved, is shown in the following passage, "And it came to pass, while the ark stood in Kirjath-jearim, (and that time was long; for it was twenty years), that all the house of Israel lamented (or 'panted with desire') after the Lord. And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only; and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines. Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the Lord only. And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the Lord. And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the Lord (a sign of their repentance with abundance of tears), and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the Lord."* The Philistines being informed of that gathering at Mizpeh, came with their armies against them. Israel was affrighted, and said to Samuel, "Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us that He will save us

* 1 Sam. vii. 2-6.

out of the hand of the Philistines. And Samuel took a sucking-lamb and offered it as a burnt-offering wholly unto the Lord, and Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel, and the Lord answered him. . . . And the Lord thundered with a great voice on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel." It was on that occasion that Samuel planted the Eben-Ezer, saying, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."*

Before proceeding further, we have two short remarks to make—1st, How significant and beautiful is the expression used by the Bride, "The watchmen found *me!*" The watchmen who were sent by the Lord for that purpose, found her going about seeking her Beloved. Had she not been doing so, the watchmen would either not have found her, or found her to no purpose. At another time the Lord complained that He sent watchman after watchman, prophet after prophet, "rising early and sending them," but that Israel did not profit by them, because she was then asleep in deep indifference and sin. But now the watchmen found her because she was going about seeking her Beloved; and though it did not lead to the entire discovery of Him, yet this meeting with the watchmen was of great benefit to her, as we learn from the passage quoted above.

In chap. v. the watchmen meet her again and again, during her search for her Beloved, but instead of comforting her, as Samuel did, they smite and wound her. And why? Because Samuel found her at the end of a long night, and the dawn of a glorious day, while there the prophets found her at the very commencement of a gloomy night, and foretold to her the sufferings she would undergo during its continuance.

2nd, Our second remark is about the interesting fact, that towards the end of the long night of the Bridegroom's absence, He was pleased to indicate His speedy return by pouring out the spirit of prophecy on a great number of men, under their leader and teacher, the holy prophet Samuel. From 1 Sam. x. 5, xix. 20—24, we learn that in those days, the Spirit of prophecy was poured out largely on many Israelites, who were to be seen in whole "companies," traversing the land in all directions, and thus preparing the nation for the coming of the brilliant day of the

* 1 Sam. vii. 7—10. See to the end of the chap.

return of the Covenant angel, to abide again between the cherubim, to dwell again in the midst of His chosen people, His beloved Bride. How mysterious the ways of the ever gracious God of Israel, who in the midst of wrath remembereth mercy, and sends forerunners of His grace, to the comfort and joy of His people that wait for Him!

4. It was but a little after I had passed from them,
That I found Him whom my soul loveth,
I held Him, and would not let Him go,
Until I had brought Him into my mother's house,
And into the chamber of her that conceived me.

Emerging from the clouds of misery and affliction which covered her during the long night, the rejoicing Bride found the interval comparatively short between her meeting Samuel and asking him for her Beloved, and her happiness in finding Him whom her soul loved; though that period was full of events, of which some were very disastrous. Indeed the farther we enter into this Song the more we find it to be like an astronomical globe, on which a small group of little points represents some great siderial system comprising many worlds in the immeasurable space, and where a single and scarcely perceptible mark stands for some enormous star many thousands of times larger than our globe. Solomon, in the small space which his song occupies, could but sketch some of the more prominent events illustrative of the love of the eternal God to His chosen and beloved Church on earth; and even those he could only describe in a few words—till he comes to the happy period in his own reign, when the Church had reached the highest pinnacle of glory under the Old Testament dispensation, when He enlarges somewhat more in its description.

“It was but a little” (or “but a short while”) “after I had passed from them,” *i.e.*, but a little while after I had left the watchmen whom I asked if they had seen my Beloved, “that I found him whom my soul loveth,” &c. It was but a short time after the death of the prophet Samuel, which was lamented by the whole nation,* that King Saul, on account of his iniquities, especially on account of the blood of the priests of the city of Nob, whom he had mercilessly

* See 1 Sam. xxv. 1, xxviii. 3.

destroyed with their wives and children, found himself involved in his last disastrous war with the Philistines, when the Lord refused to answer him by dreams, or by the Urim, or by prophets. But at the very time that the cloud of divine wrath enveloped Saul and his camp, the Lord was with David, the "man after his own heart," answered him by the Urim, and gave him a great victory over the predatory bands of the Amalekites.* After the death of Saul, David asked the Lord for direction, and was ordered to go to Hebron, where he was anointed king over the tribe of Judah, and, seven years later, over all Israel. When David saw himself established king over all Israel according to the Lord's promise, by the prophet Samuel, his first step was directed towards Jerusalem to take possession of Mount Zion, the chosen mountain of God, regarding which Moses said in his song of deliverance, "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them on the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in: in the sanctuary, O Lord, which thine hands have established."† That mountain was still in the possession of the Jebusites, who had a very strong castle on it, which David took from them, and on that part of the conquered mountain built a city which was called the city of David. But it seems that by convention David allowed to Araunah, the subdued Jebusite king, (who, according to 2 Sam. xxiv. 16—25, appears to have become a proselyte to the true religion), to retain some of his possessions on it, among which was the threshing-floor on Mount Moriah, which afterwards proved, by a special revelation from God, to be the very spot on which the sanctuary was to be built, as we shall see hereafter.

We thus clearly see that immediately after the coronation of David as king over all Israel, the last shades of the gloomy night completely dispersed, the bright day dawned, the glorious and long-absent Bridegroom appeared again among his people, and that joyful morning grew brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. Soon after David took possession of Mount Zion, and began to build the city of that name. We read, "And David went on, and grew great, and the Lord God of Hosts was with him. . . .

* 1 Sam. xxx. † Exod. xv. 17.

And David perceived that the Lord had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for his people Israel's sake.* The Philistines, alarmed at the rapid progress of Israel towards glory and power under their new king, invaded Judea, "and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim. And David inquired of the Lord, saying, shall I go up to the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into mine hand? And the Lord said unto David, Go up; for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thine hand."† He obeyed, and overthrew them with great slaughter; still, however, the Philistines gathered the remains of their broken armies, and recruited them, and put forth all their strength in a second effort in the same valley. David again asked counsel of the Lord, and was ordered not to attack the enemy in front, but to "fetch a compass behind them" (*i.e.*, to enclose them round about, so as not to allow them an easy retreat, and thus finish the war at once), "and come upon them over against the mulberry-trees. And let it be, when thou shalt hear the sound of steps in the tops of the mulberry-trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself: for then shall the Lord go out before thee to smite the host of the Philistines."‡ The victory that followed was such as to put an end to the contest with the Philistines for a long time to come, and to show to Israel that the mighty Angel that led them through the wilderness had graciously returned to them to protect them against their enemies, and had manifested His presence by the sound of His invincible hosts, which had fought against their nearest and bitterest adversaries and overthrown them.

Thus the long desolate Bride found her Beloved again at the bright day-break of David's reign; Him of whom Moses sang at the Red Sea, "Jehovah is a man of war: Jehovah is his name. . . . Thy right hand, O Lord, is glorious in power: thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy."§ Him of whom David afterwards sung, "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O thou mighty one, with thy glory and with thy majesty."|| Him she found and would not let go, until she brought Him with shouting and joy, and songs of triumph, into the chamber provided on

* 2 Sam. v. 10—12.

† 2 Sam. v. 18, 19.

‡ 2 Sam. v. 24.

§ Exod. xv. 3—6.

|| Ps. xlv. 3.

Mount Zion for His holy Chariot, the Ark of the Covenant ; for so her devoted prince “sware unto the Lord, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob, Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed ; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, nor slumber to mine eyelids, until I have found a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.”* And so we read in sacred history, that immediately after the triumph over the Philistines, by the Lord’s presence, “David arose and went with all the people that were with him, to bring up from Baalah of Judea (which is the same with Kirjath Jearim), the Ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the Lord of Hosts that dwelleth between the cherubim.”† Though on that occasion the Lord showed his displeasure in the death of the daring Uzzah (for the Levites were to carry the covered Ark by its projecting staves, but were prohibited from touching it on pain of death,‡ while on this occasion it was carried on a waggon, and Uzzah dared to touch it), still the Bride was not discouraged by that event, nor would she let her Bridegroom go ; but after three months went again, and brought it up to Zion with shoutings and great joy, thousands chanting and playing on instruments, and Levites exclaiming, “Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall enter in ;” one division of the choir asking, “Who is this King of Glory ?” and another answering in triumph, “The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle, he is the King of Glory ;”§ and the sweet singer of Israel himself exclaiming with exulting voice, “O let us go into his tabernacle ; let us worship at his footstool. Arise, O Lord, into thy rest, thou and the ark of thy strength. Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness ; and let thy saints shout for joy.”||

As we must come again on this pleasant subject, to which we shall find allusion made in the 6th, 7th, and 8th verses of this chapter, we shall only remark here, that this is by no means the only passage of Scripture in which sometimes Zion, sometimes Jerusalem, and sometimes both together, are called the mother of the Church of God. Moses had

* Ps. cxxxii. 2—5.

† 2 Sam. vi. 2.

‡ Num. iv. 15.

§ Ps. xxiv. 7, 8.

|| Ps. cxxxii. 7—9.

already called Mount Zion, "the mountain of God's inheritance;" "the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in."* David had said, "For the Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation."† Hence Zion is called the Lord's "footstool" (*i.e.*, the place of his throne on earth, Ps. xcix. 5, cxxxii. 7); and the Lord said regarding her, "The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious."‡ Again the Lord calls her, "The place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever."§ Hence it is with great propriety that the Church of God is called in Scripture, "Daughter of Zion," and that Zion is regarded as the mother of the Church. When Zion, in deep distress because of the captivity and sufferings of her children, is made to say, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me," the Lord answers by the prophet, "Can a woman forget her sucking child. . . . She may forget, but I will not forget thee. . . . Thy children shall hasten to thee. . . . As I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament."|| Again, the Lord, speaking to captive Israel, saith, "Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have sent away? (*i.e.*, Zion) or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, by your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions was your mother sent away."¶ We could quote many more passages to the same purpose, but the above, taken in connection with the events described, are sufficient to explain what the Bride means in saying, that when she had found her Beloved she laid hold on Him and would not let Him go until she brought Him into her mother's house, into the temporary sanctuary prepared by David on Mount Zion, and into "the chamber of her that conceived her." With regard to the last expression, we beg the reader to remember that the most precious promises made to Abraham and the everlasting covenant made with him, were ratified and confirmed by an oath on Mount Moriah, when the father of the faithful was called upon to

* Exod. xv. 17.

† Ps. cxxxii. 13.

‡ Is. lx. 13.

§ Ezek. xliii. 7.

|| Is. xlix. 14—25.

¶ Is. l. 1. See Is. lii.

prefigure the mysterious and awful scene of Golgotha, when the eternal Father gave his only begotten Son in sacrifice for the Church; hence the Church with great propriety can also call Zion "her that conceived me." Finally, the Psalmist himself describes in glowing language the long night which enveloped Israel during the absence of her Beloved, and His ultimate return to her in great glory and splendour: "He cast out the heathen also before them, and divided them an inheritance by line, and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents. Yet they tempted and provoked the Most High God and kept not his testimonies. . . . When God heard this he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel. So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which he placed among men; and delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemies' hand. He gave over his people also unto the sword, and was wroth with his inheritance. The fire consumed their young men; and their maidens were not given in marriage. Their priests fell by the sword; and their widows made no lamentation. Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine, and he smote his enemies in their rear guard (referring to David's victory over the army of the Philistines whom he attacked in the rear according to the Lord's order*); he put them to a perpetual reproach. Moreover, he refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim; but chose the tribe of Judah, the Mount Zion which he loved."† Thus we have in this Psalm a full description of the history of the same period of which our Song treats in the first four verses of this chapter.

5. I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
 By the roes or by the hinds of the field,
 If ye stir up, or if ye disturb this love,
 Until it hath (or "shall") become complete.

In the second chapter, verses 4—7, we have seen that when the mutual love between the Bridegroom and Bride had reached a great height—when the manifestations of His love on the dedication feast were such that it made her say :

* 2 Sam. v. 24.

† Ps. lxxviii. 55—68.

“The king brought me into his chambers, and his banner over me was (or is) love,” she was also represented in verse 7 as if afraid lest the daughters of Jerusalem, or the Gentile nations, should become jealous of her glory, and by rivalry divide or disturb her love before it accomplished its aim, in the consummation of the marriage, and there she likewise adjured them, in the very same words, to allow that love to go on and reach its proper issue undisturbed. After many vicissitudes that love again reached a great height in the days of David, when the Bridegroom returned and dwelt in all His glory on Mount Zion; and with this change the fear of rivalry again revived, and therefore the Bride renews her charge against the daughters of Jerusalem, conjuring them again not to disturb that love until it had become complete, or until it shall have ripened to the accomplishment of the matrimonial engagement.* We only remark here one important difference in the circumstances on these two solemn occasions. The tabernacle in the wilderness was a portable sanctuary in which the Covenant-Angel dwelt only when erected on Israel’s encampment. The Bride being then a poor wanderer in a dreary desert, and guided as it were blindfold by her Beloved in the pillar of cloud and fire, it was then very proper for her to say: “The king hath brought me *into His chambers.*” But her position now was entirely changed. She was now completely settled in the Land of Promise, and planted in safety around her mother, Mount Zion, when King David had built a temporary sanctuary soon to be superseded by a magnificent temple, to which he had brought the Ark of the Covenant, and invited the King of Glory to enter and dwell between the Cherubim, and therefore the joy-enraptured Bride says now: “I brought him into the house of my mother.” But although this was a great step in the progress of that love; though the Bride was now in one sense surer than ever before of her Beloved’s affections, still her fears of being disturbed by rivals, and her ambition of being the only Bride of the divine Bridegroom, the only chosen nation of the Most High God, increased instead of diminished. And may not

* For the further explanation of which we refer the reader to our exposition in chap. ii. 7, and Note pp. 108.

this be intended as an intimation by the sacred author, yea by the Spirit of prophecy, that the marriage of the Lamb with his Church was not to be consummated, until that Church shall contain virgins of all nations and tongues, and when the Bride, instead of being jealous, shall herself invite "virgins, her companions" to come and embrace the love and free grace of the King of Glory, and partake with her of His salvation!

HERE ENDS THE SECOND PART OF THE SONG

P A R T I I I .

ARGUMENT OF VERSES 6—11 OF CHAP. III.

(Vv. 6--8.) A graphic though short description of the solemnities of the happy day of the translation of the Ark to Mount Zion ; its introduction into the temporary sanctuary ; allusion to the order of Levites in the service of that sanctuary. (Vv. 9—11) Contain a short description of Solomon's temple ; of the inner sanctuary ; Ark and Cherubim ; and an allusion to the wonderful display of glory and divine majesty by the Covenant-Angel on the day of the dedication of that temple.

[FIRST CHOIR OF LEVITES.]

6. Who is this (or she) that cometh up from the wilderness
Like columns of smoke,* perfumed with myrrh,
And incense of all the powders of the merchants?

[SECOND CHOIR OF LEVITES.]

7. Behold here the palanquin of Solomon,†
Three score valiant men are about it,
Of the mighty men of Israel.

* "Like the columns of smoke." But literally כְּתִמְרוֹת עָשָׁן (Kethimroth ashan) means "like the palm-trees of smoke"—a beautiful figure for the columns of smoke ascending, in a calm and serene day, from the altar of incense, upright like a palm-tree to a great height, and then bowing their head and dividing into branches by the pressure of the air, becoming like an inverted crown at the top of the column. One must see both at once, to appreciate the beauty of the comparison. Though in our word a ׀ is introduced after the first ׀, still there can be no doubt that the root of the word is תָּמָר (Tamar) "Palm-tree;" for in Joel ii. 30 (or iii. 3) the same word occurs without the ׀. For further explanation, see Exposition.

† "The palanquin" or sedan, or portable vehicle, in which kings in the East used to be carried when on a long journey—also a sort of pleasure couch or sofa, on which they reposed by day when fatigued with business, and after repast. And here we think it proper to observe the difference between the three Hebrew words usually rendered by "bed" in the common version—1st, עֵרֶשׂ (Eress) never signifies "bed," but always "pavilion or palanquin," for being carried from place to place, or "pleasure couch," for repose by day in health or in sickness ; but never for sleep by night. 2d, מִטָּה (Mittah), which in most places

8. They all bear swords, being expert in war ;
 Every one hath his sword upon his thigh
 Because of the fear in the night.

Here we have, in a few but comprehensive and beautiful lines, the celebration of the great solemnity which took place on the day of the translation of the Ark of God from the house of Obed-edom to Mount Zion, when Israel, along with their devoted king David, greatly rejoiced before the Lord. Indeed, solemnities of such a nature Israel enjoyed only twice, first in the days of David as now mentioned, and next

has the same signification as the former, meaning "palanquin or sedan," also a "pleasure couch" for repose by day (see Amos iii. 12, and vi. 4, where both *Eress* and *Mittah* are described as used by rich worldlings at and after their banquets). Such was the *Mittah* or *couch* on which Queen Esther sat at the banquet in the King's Palace (see Esther vii. 8), and which could not be anything else but a magnificent palanquin or pleasure couch for repose by day (see our remarks on chap. i. ver. 16, and note there). These rich people used also when in illness to repose by day. On such a *Mittah* or *couch* Jacob lay by day when he received Joseph (Gen. xlvii. 31), but his bed on which he slept by night is called *Mishkav* (מִשְׁכָּב), "sleeping, or lying couch," in German "Schlafstätte," (see Gen. xlix. 4), and this *Mishkav* is the third word rendered "bed" in the common version and the only one positively signifying in Hebrew "bed" for sleeping on by night. The *Mittah* and *Eress* of the rich were of magnificent form and rich material, as precious wood, silver and gold, or ivory (see Amos vi. 4, "beds of ivory"). Such like must have been David's *Eress* or pleasure couch, which he swore not to ascend until the tabernacle on Mount Zion for the reception of the Ark should be ready (Ps. cxxxii. 3). The *Mishkav*, or common couch for sleep by night, originally consisted of bedding spread on the ground (as is still in use among the unsoftened and uncorrupted people of the East), though those of the rich might have been softer and costlier mattresses than those of the poor. But luxury soon introduced among the rich the use of a sort of *Mittah* instead of the simple floor-spread *Mishkav* by night. Hence these two words are sometimes promiscuously used to denote either the night couch or the day sofa, as in 2 Sam. iv. 5, Ishbosheth lay "on a bed at noon" literally, "he lay the lying of noon-day," *i. e.*, he reposed on his couch at noon according to custom. This was done on a *Mittah* or "pleasure couch," though it stood in his *bed-room* (v. 7), and might have served for both *Mittah* and *Mishkav*. As was said above the *Mittah* and *Eress* were also used for carrying great men from place to place, hence the *State-bier*, on which the coffins of great men were carried at the funeral, was also called *Mittah* (see 2 Sam. iii. 31). Finally in this very Song we have a careful distinction made between *Mishkav* and *Mittah*. In the first verse of this chapter, where the Bride speaks of her sufferings during the nights of her Lord's absence, she says: "Upon my *Mishkav* (מִשְׁכָּב) during the nights," and not "upon my *Mittah*," for it was not yet common to use the *Mittah* by night, whilst here in this verse it is *Mittah* meaning "palanquin" or "sedan," and used as a figure for the Ark of the Covenant. See Exposition.

in the days of Solomon at the dedication of the temple. Both of these extraordinary events are celebrated in the second half of the 3d chapter of this Song. But before entering on the explanation of the passage before us, we think it of importance to notice, first, that the whole of what we call the *second part* of the Song, commencing at chap. ii. ver. 8, and ending with chap. iii. ver. 5 inclusive, and extending over the whole period from the dedication of the tabernacle in the wilderness at the foot of Mount Sinai to the dedication of David's tabernacle on Mount Zion, is spoken by the *Bride alone*, and that Solomon evidently chose this method for the sake of brevity as well as beauty. Moreover, it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to continue the dialogue between Bridegroom and Bride over a period during which their communion was twice interrupted, once, in the wilderness, after the great disturbance caused by the spies, and the thirty-eight years of gloomy winter that followed, and again, during the long night that continued in the times of the Judges. Solomon, therefore, chose the far better way, of putting the whole of the second part into the mouth of the Bride alone. Standing now on Mount Zion, rejoicing before the Lord, and offering sacrifices of peace and deliverance, she looks back on all the vicissitudes and sufferings, deliverances and encouragements, which she had experienced since the day she stood before her God at Horeb, and rejoiced at the dedication of the tabernacle. Now she recounts with tears of joy all that happened to her since she left the mountain of God, and the scenes of Sinai, until she came to the chosen and holy Mount Zion, to which she brought the Ark of the Covenant as soon as she found her Beloved after His long absence. Arrived with the Ark on Mount Zion she stops her recital, and leaves to the choirs of Levites to celebrate the solemnities of the day, in which, playing on their instruments and adoring and praising the Lord for His mercies and for His works of wonder towards His chosen people Israel, they should likewise sing of the relation of God to His Church, and the happiness and glory of the Bride in her Beloved.

Sacred history informs us that when David resolved to bring the Ark of the Covenant from the house of Obed-edom, where it remained three months, to Mount Zion, and place it in the tabernacle which he had prepared, he gathered all

the children of Israel, purified and sanctified the priests and Levites, formed from the latter a numerous choir of singers and players on instruments, divided and arranged under their leaders or chief musicians; "So David, and the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord out of the house of Obed-edom with joy. And it came to pass when God helped the Levites that bare the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, that they offered seven bullocks and seven rams. And David was clothed with a robe of fine linen, and all the Levites that bare the Ark, and the singers, and Chenaniah, the master of the song, with the singers; David had also upon him an ephod of linen. Thus all Israel brought up the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making music with psalteries and harps. . . . So they brought the Ark of God, and set it in the midst of the tabernacle that David had prepared for it: and they offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings before God. And when David had made an end of offering the burnt-offerings and the peace-offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord . . . and he appointed certain of the Levites to minister before the Ark of the Lord, and to celebrate, and to thank and praise the Lord God of Israel."* It was no doubt on that happy day that the magnificent 24th Psalm was first sung, when the choir of Levites that accompanied those who brought the Ark to the door of the tabernacle exclaimed, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and let the King of Glory enter!"—and when the choir, stationed within the tabernacle, asked, "Who is this King of Glory?" those without answered, "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle; the Lord of Hosts, *He* is the King of Glory." We are also told that it was on that solemn day that David delivered unto Asaph and his brethren a part of the 105th Psalm to be sung before the Lord—a Psalm which, among seraphic strains, and angelic adoration and praise, records also the wonders of the Lord of Hosts, and the marvellous loving kindness that he showed to His chosen people from the day that he made the Covenant with Abraham, unto that on which a great part of

* 1 Chron. xv. 25 - 28; xvi 1-4.

His promises were fulfilled. This was likewise the first occasion since Israel came out of Egypt that they offered to the Lord such an enormous number of sacrifices. According to the account given of that holy procession in 2 Sam. vi. 13, after every six steps the Levites made with the Ark, David offered a bullock and a ram, so that the whole road from the house of Obed-edom to Mount Zion was full of altars with sacrifices and incense, from which columns of smoke ascended towards heaven, lifting proudly their heads like a line or alley of lofty palm trees through which the procession passed. How beautiful therefore the metaphor employed by Solomon when putting that question into the mouth of the Levites, "Who is this (or who is she) that cometh up from the wilderness like columns (or palm-trees) of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and incense of all the powders of the merchant?" And the answer to this was, "Behold here the palanquin of Solomon," *i.e.*, see here the Ark of the Prince of Peace, of the Covenant Angel dwelling between the Cherubim on the mercy-seat, and see here the armed and mighty men of war that surround it, and inasmuch as the men carrying and surrounding that throne of glory belong to the house of Israel, she who cometh forth so triumphantly from the wilderness of vicissitudes and sufferings must certainly be the Bride of that King of Glory—her rejoicings, her sacrifices, and incense burnt on these altars are an indication that "the Lord her God is with her, and the shoutings of a King in the midst of her. She exults for joy because her long absent Lord and King hath returned to dwell in the midst of her; she hath brought him into her mother's house, upon Mount Zion, the beloved and chosen hill of God."

The figure employed in this passage was taken from scenes very common in those days in the East. If a matrimonial alliance was agreed upon between two princely families whose dominions were separated by a large tract of uninhabited country or desert, the bridegroom, at a time appointed, despatched a general with a strong detachment of his army, and with his royal palanquin, to bring the bride from her native country. Accompanied likewise by a guard of honour of her father's army, she was carried with great pomp and ceremony through the wilderness—sweet spices were burnt continually before her pavilion to purify the air

of the noxious vapours ; and at night when the whole train reposed, her palanquin was placed in the centre of the camp, and a strong guard of the mightiest warriors surrounded it in turns with their armour ready for action in case of an attack by some nocturnal bands of the predatory Arabs. A caravan of travellers meeting such a procession in the wilderness, would stand astonished for a while, and ask one another, "Who is this princess coming forth from the wilderness preceded by such volumes of smoke?"—the smoke of the incense burnt before her pavilion. The answer would naturally be, "Behold the palanquin with its banners and ensigns belonging to this or that king, behold these warriors around it who belong to this or that nation ; it must therefore be the bride of the prince of that nation, who is conveyed to her bridegroom—hence that pomp, hence that solemn procession and their rejoicings." In our Song the case was somewhat different, but still the figure is no less appropriate and striking. Here the great King of Zion went Himself to bring His chosen Bride from Egypt, as Moses describes it with astonishment : "Hath ever God assayed to go and take him a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm, and by great terrors according to all that the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?"* He led His Bride Himself through the wilderness by pillars of cloud and of fire by day and by night, while He rode triumphantly in His glorious palanquin between the Cherubim of the Ark of the Covenant, which emblematically represented His awful throne on which He sits in heaven when borne by cherubs and seraphim. Now the scene has changed a little—the Bride, by His powerful aid and presence, has become mistress of the promised land of Canaan, and of the holy mountain of God—Mount Zion, which she calls her "Mother's house," and to which she now conveys the palanquin of her invisible but present Lord, that He might dwell in the sanctuary which she has erected for Him. This sacred procession was conducted with great solemnity, with songs of praise and shouts of joy. As the Ark advanced six steps from the house of Obed-edom, an altar was erected,

* Deut. iv. 34.

and sacrifices and incense put upon it, and so the whole distance over which the procession traversed was filled with altars sending up columns of smoke towards heaven (like so many lofty palm-trees), and marking the progress of the procession as if it had passed through a magnificent alley of trees planted and raised as the Bride went along, from her habitation to the King's palace. Arrived on Mount Zion, the sacrifices of joy exceed number, the exultation of the chosen nation baffles description—their praises and adorations, their shoutings, their psalms and hymns, the melodious harmony of thousands of musical instruments fill the air and re-echoes in the silent valley, and among the distant hills. Thousands of adoring Levites exclaim, "O give thanks unto the Lord, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the nations. Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him, talk ye of his wondrous works. Glory ye in his holy name; let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord. Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face continually."* Having recounted the progress of the covenant made with Abraham, and the faithfulness of God in fulfilling his promises, the adoring companies continue their strain, saying, "Sing unto the Lord, all the earth; show forth from day to day his salvation. Declare his glory among the heathen; his marvellous works among all nations. For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; he is also to be feared above all gods. . . . Glory and honour are in his presence, strength and gladness are in his place. Give unto the Lord, ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name, bring an offering and come before him, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. . . . Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice, and let men say among the nations, the Lord reigneth. . . . Then shall the trees of the forest sing aloud at the presence of the Lord, because he cometh to judge the earth. O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever" †

It is in the midst of that celestial scene on earth—it is on that glorious day the like of which this earth has witnessed but few, that Solomon here makes the choirs of Levites ask each other. "Who is this (or she) that cometh up from the

* 1 Chron. xvi. 8—11.

† 1 Chron. xvi. 23—33.

wilderness like columns of smoke," &c.? To which it is answered, "Behold, here the palanquin of Solomon (or 'the palanquin which is Solomon's,' *i.e.*, known as his by its peculiar magnificence, and colours, and designs), threescore valiant men are about it of the mighty men of Israel," &c. As we know that the name Solomon is employed here only as the type of the great Prince of Peace, this answer, therefore, may be paraphrased as follows, "Behold the Ark of the Covenant of the great God of Abraham, the dwelling place of the Angel of that Covenant; and behold the mighty men chosen of the Levites to surround and watch that glorious palanquin and sanctuary are of the nation of Israel, and of her valiant warriors. It is evident, therefore, that she who cometh out of the wilderness with such splendour, with such shouts of triumph and joy, with such columns of smoke from so many altars, is none but that favoured and happy nation, the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the chosen people and Bride of the Most High, and that her great joy is caused by the fact, that her Beloved has now come to dwell in the midst of her, on His chosen and holy hill of Zion."

Nor is the number of "three score valiant and armed men," watching about the tabernacle on Mount Zion, taken here at random as some easily satisfied commentators imagine; for this was really the number of those mighty Levites, chosen and appointed by David to the exclusive service of porters, or watchmen, at the different gates of the sanctuary, day and night. In 1 Chron. ix., we have the arrangement of the Levites in the days of David, and in verse 17 we read, "And the porters were Shallum, and Akkub, and Talmon, and Ahiman, and their brethren; Shallum being the chief," (*i.e.*, the chief of the four captains mentioned here). Verse 19, "And Shallum, the son of Kore, the son of Eliasaph, the son of Korah, and his brethren (of the house of his father) the Korahites, were over the work of the service, keepers of the gates of the tabernacle." Again, we read in the same chapter, "And Zechariah, the son of Meshelemiah, was porter of the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. All these which were chosen to be porters in the gates, were two hundred and twelve. . . . So they and their children had the oversight of the gates of the house of the Lord, namely, of the house of the taber-

nacle by wards. In four quarters were the porters, toward the east, west, north, and south. And their brethren which were in their villages were to come after seven days from time to time with them. For these Levites, the four chief porters were in their set office, and were over the chambers and treasuries of the house of God. And they lodged (or passed the nights) round about the house of God, because this charge was upon them, and they had also to open (*i.e.*, the gates) every morning.* But in this chapter we have only the names of the four captains or chief porters, and the mention of the 212 porters under them, which seem to have belonged to their own families; but we have no mention of the other divisions, nor of the exact number of porters in every ward. In chap. xvi., where the description of the solemnities of the day above referred to is given, we read, "So he (David) left there, before the Ark of the covenant of the Lord, Asaph and his brethren, to minister before the Ark continually, according to every day's services (*i.e.*, to sing praises before the Lord, as Asaph was one of the chief musicians.) And Obed-edom with their brethren, three score and eight, also Obed-edom, the son of Jeduthun, and Hosah, to be porters."† Here we have the three different officers, with sixty-eight men described as belonging to one ward. But another passage makes it clear that one of these three officers with eight men must have had the charge of the adjacent buildings, where were kept the ministering vessels and instruments of the sanctuary, and also the magazines of flour, wine, spices, &c., mentioned in chap. ix. 28—32, while the other two officers with the sixty men had the exclusive charge of watching day and night at the four principal gates of the court, and at the door of the sanctuary. When toward the close of David's life, the enormous treasures and magazines were so greatly increased that another arrangement was called for, and those who had in charge the watching of these treasures had to be much increased in number, still the watchmen of the tabernacle remained the same, as we read, "All those of the sons of Obed-edom; they and their sons, and their brethren, able men for strength for the service, were three score and two of Obed-edom."‡ From all these different passages

* 1 Chron. ix. 21—27. † 1 Chron. xvi. 37, 38. ‡ 1 Chron. xxvi. 8

(especially from the chapter last quoted), we think it quite clear that the number of each ward of Levites appointed to watch round about the sanctuary, was composed of sixty mighty men, commanded by two officers, while all the different wards were under the direction of four princes or chief captains. Hence, to complete the beauty of the figure, Solomon makes the choirs of Levites point out to the sixty armed and mighty men of Israel who surrounded and watched day and night the sanctuary, where was placed the palanquin of the great Prince of Peace, the Ark with the mercy-seat and the Cherubim, representing the high throne of the divine King of Zion.

But the tent or tabernacle on Mount Zion into which David has placed the Ark, was only a temporary habitation, until the temple which he meditated to build, and which by divine command was left for Solomon, should be ready as a permanent habitation for the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel. In the next three verses, therefore, we have the description of that second event, namely, of the translation of the Ark from the temporary tabernacle on Mount Zion, into the permanent temple built by king Solomon on Moriah.

THE TEMPLE OF SOLOMON.

[ANOTHER CHOIR OF LEVITES]

9. King Solomon made Him a Throne-chamber*
Of the wood (or woods) of Lebanon.

* אִפִּירִיּוֹן (Apiryon, or Apirion) is one of those foreign words which were at an early period adopted into the Hebrew language, and the roots of the most of which, as well as their etymology, are now difficult to be ascertained. To these belong אֶרְמוֹן (Armon) "a palace," אַפְדָּן (Apadan) "a portable palace, or pavilion," used by Eastern kings in travelling (see Daniel xi. 45), and several others. Some were adopted at later periods, as דַּרְכֵּמוֹן (Darkemon) the plural of which is דַּרְכֵּמוֹנִים (Darke-monim, as Ezra ii. 69; Nehem. vii. 70—72) which means the gold coins made under the reign of Darius the Mede, and called *Darics*; and which are not to be confounded with אַדְרָכּוֹן (Adarkon) plural אַדְרָכּוֹנִים (Adarkonim) which Ezra uses in 1 Chron. xxix. 7, and in his own Book, viii. 27, to denote either a gold coin, or a certain weight of gold, as used in the days of David; for the former passage refers to the donation of the princes of Israel in the days of David, and the latter to the gold vessels which Nebuchadnezzar carried away into Babylon and were now returned to Ezra. It surely cannot be mere

10. The pillars thereof he made of silver,
 Its overlaying (*i.e.* wainscot, plating) of gold,
 Its covering (or curtain) of purple ;
 Within it is strewn love
 Of the daughters of Jerusalem.

chance, or a wilful play of words which made Ezra and Nehemiah write Darkemonim when they speak of the gold coins current in their own days, but when Ezra speaks of the days of David, or of the vessels returned, he should use both times Adarkonim ! It is true, that in these foreign words an \aleph is sometimes added without any reason, but then it would have been Adarkemonim, and not have changed the word entirely as if it were another word altogether.

Now as to Apiryon and its etymology, commentators and lexicographers are either altogether silent, or next to it. But the reader will observe that having, by the aid of God, come so far in the explanation of the Song by comparing it with the sacred history of the ancient Church, we cannot be indifferent with regard to the meaning of a word which forms the link of the whole passage, nay of the whole book. From the context and connection of this passage—and since as we trust it has been proved beyond contradiction that verses 6—8 of this chapter refer to the translation of the Ark to Mount Zion by David—it is evident that our passage must refer to the temple of Solomon, and that the word Apiryon must designate the most holy place into which the Ark was then placed, whether the precise etymology of this word can now be ascertained or not. Some of the early Hebrew authors, especially among the Cabalists, understood the whole passage as referring to Solomon's temple, but as to the word Apiryon they make it denote everything, as they often do with words which they do not understand.

Reduced as we are to seek the etymology of the word in foreign languages, we offer the following suggestions to the reader—1st, Apiryon may be the diminutive of $\text{A}\pi\rho\rho\rho\rho\rho\rho$ (Apyros), from the Greek α and $\pi\rho\rho$ denoting a place or thing that has, or receives no fire (or light), so the inner sanctuary in Solomon's temple had neither windows to admit the light of the sun, nor lamps burning, nor an altar with fire on it (see 1 Kings viii. 12); and may not its termination be either according to an ancient Greek or Doric form, or to that of the Hebrew in the words כִּלְיֹון (Kilayon), הֶרְיֹון (Herayon), קִיקְיֹון (Kikayon), &c. ? 2d.

In the Persic افرنج (Aphrang) denotes “a Throne,” and افرينا (Aphrina) “the Creator.” As we are by no means bound to the Rabbinical punctuation, especially in foreign words, and as the word in question may read “Apherion,” or “Aphrion,” it may either be taken from the former word and denote “a place or chamber for a throne,” or, if from the latter, it may denote “a sanctuary,” “a dwelling-place for the Creator,” or, it may even be a compound of both the above words; and very fond, indeed, the ancient Persians seem to have been of extravagant compounds of even three words and more, as $\text{אֹהֶל־שֶׁדֶר־פְּנִים}$, and אֶרֶב־גִּיּוֹן , and אֶרֶב־שֶׁנִּים , prove. 3d. The LXX. rendered that word by Φορείον (Phorion, or Phoreion), which means “a chariot, sedan, or litter,” and as we already observed that the \aleph may be added as in many foreign words it was, the word may read A-phorion, or A-pherion. But what is the meaning of that chariot? It can-

11. Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion,
 And behold King Solomon with the crown
 Wherewith his mother crowned him
 On the day of his espousals,—
 On the day of the gladness of his heart.

In verse 4 of this chapter the Bride told us how she had found Her Beloved, and how she had laid hold on him, and would not let Him go until she had brought Him into her mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived her. We have already remarked that by her "mother's house" the Bride means Jerusalem, or Zion, and the tabernacle built there by David for the reception of the Ark when brought thence from the house of Obed-edom; and that by the "chamber of her that conceived her," she means Solomon's temple and the most holy place in which the Ark was placed permanently when the temple was ready. We

not again signify "a royal litter or palanquin," 1st, because this would again be figurative of the Ark, but the Ark was made by Moses, and not by King Solomon. 2d. A litter or palanquin cannot be spoken of properly as constructed or built מֵעֵצֵי הַלְבָּנוֹן (meatzey halvanon) "of the different woods of Lebanon" (which is only proper for a large building) with pillars of silver, overlaid and inlaid with gold, and covered, or overhung, with purple, and within as being strewn with love of the daughters of Jerusalem! 3d. In sacred history we are told that Solomon made himself a magnificent and curious throne, but this was made of ivory overlaid with gold (see 1 Kings x. 18—20), but none of the other materials is mentioned. It is, therefore, we think beyond doubt that this Apiryon, whether rendered "Chariot," or, as we have rendered it "Throne-chamber," can denote nothing else but the most holy place in Solomon's temple, made for the reception of the Ark of the Covenant, which was the emblem of the Lord's throne in heaven. It is remarkable that when David delivered to his son the pattern of the temple, of all its divisions and of all its sacred utensils, according to the revelation of the Holy Spirit made to him, and when it is spoken of the inner sanctuary, it reads thus, "And the pattern of the מֵעֵצֵי הַלְבָּנוֹן (Chariot), and of its golden Cherubim to spread out their wings and cover the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord" (see 1 Chron. xxviii. 1—18). Here we see that the most holy place with the colossal Cherubim under which the Ark was placed, is called, *Mer-kavah* or "chariot," but this is not according to our notion of a chariot, but it means a pavilion, or magnificent chamber, where a throne is placed, and therefore we could not find a better word to express the meaning of Apiryon than "Throne-chamber." Jeremiah said, "A glorious high throne, from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary" (Jer. xvii. 12.) So may the above cited Persian word have denoted not only a throne, but also the pavilion in which it stood; and the Greek Φορσιον might have its origin from that word as well as from Φορσεω or φερω, and also denote a magnificent royal chariot made to receive the king and his throne on his travels.

have seen how in verses 6—8 the choirs of Levites celebrated the great solemnity of the extraordinary procession that took place when the Bride brought her Beloved into her "mother's house," into the tabernacle on Mount Zion. But in this present passage, another and still greater solemnity is celebrated, namely, the happy day in which the Bride brought her Beloved into the chamber of His permanent dwelling, into the most holy place which King Solomon prepared for his divine antitype, the great Prince of Peace, that He might dwell among His people according to His gracious promise.

"King Solomon made Him a throne-chamber of the wood of Lebanon." It does not require much investigation into the construction and metaphorical language of this Song, to see that whenever the name Solomon is accompanied by the title *king*, it refers to king Solomon himself, while his glorious antitype is always designated *Solomon*, simply without the title king, or He is called King alone without the name Solomon, as in chap. i. verses 4, 12, &c. At the commencement of this commentary, we quoted a very pertinent remark on this subject by Bp. Patrick, in reference to the title of this Song, and which we quote here again, because of its importance to the passage we are now treating of, "But it may be observed further, that there are none of Solomon's usual titles added, as there are in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, where he is called 'Son of David, King of Israel, and King of Jerusalem.' Of which, if any reason is to be assigned, this seems the most probable, that these titles which have respect only to his temporal estates, greatness, and dignity, he wholly forgot, when he was wrapt in contemplation of that celestial Prince, the Prince of Peace, in comparison with whom all others are not worth the naming; and whose character was best expressed by the name of *Solomon* alone, He being the great peace-maker and reconciler of God and man." This explanation is applicable not only to the *title*, but to the whole; and wherever the Prince of Life and of Peace is spoken of, he is called simply *Solomon*, or *King* alone; but where the successor to David's temporal throne is intended, he is styled *King Solomon*, as was remarked above, and as is obvious throughout the book.

It is, therefore, evident that the declaration King Solomon

made "for Him" לְהוֹ —(not as it is erroneously translated "himself")—means that King Solomon made that "throne-chamber" for Him, namely, for the Covenant Angel who dwelt on the mercy-seat between the Cherubim, and regarding whom the Bride said in verse 4, that she had brought Him—her Beloved—into the house, and then into the chamber of her mother. Solomon himself said on the day of the dedication of his temple, "I have surely built thee an house to dwell in, a settled place for thee to abide in for ever."* This *throne-chamber*, which is the most holy place, was so called because the Shechinah or the God-man, who is "the brightness of his (Jehovah's) glory, and the express image of His person," was enthroned on the mercy-seat of the Ark, and which is often called in Sacred Writ "The throne of God"—"A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary."† The Lord himself calls Jerusalem "The place of my throne."‡ In the promises regarding Jerusalem's future glory, it is said, "Jerusalem shall be called "The throne of the Lord."§ Again, when David showed Solomon the pattern of the temple to be built by him, and of its various parts, &c., it is expressly stated that he showed him "the pattern of the chariot (or throne) of the golden Cherubim that spread out their wings over the Ark of the Lord."|| This *throne-chamber* is said to have been built of the wood, or rather "of the different species of wood" of Lebanon, for so מֵעֵץ (*meatzey*) signifies, and so we are told by the sacred historian that the holiest chamber was built with beams and boards of cedar, and that the two colossal cherubs, and the doors, and lintels, and side-posts, were made of the olive tree. All these were overlaid with gold, as well as the walls of the whole house.¶ In the description of Solomon's temple, we have no special account of the "silver-pillars," mentioned in the Song. It is probable that they were the pillars which supported the ceiling, though no mention is made of them in 1 Kings, as the ceiling itself is only mentioned in Chronicles, as made of fir-tree overlaid with gold, and even that refers only to the holy place.** But of the ceiling of the Most Holy we have no special account whatever; for 1 Kings vi. 9 evidently

* 1 King viii. 13.

† Jer. xvii. 12.

‡ Ezek. xliii. 7.

§ Jer. iii. 17.

|| 1 Chron. xxviii. 11, 12—18.

¶ 1 Kings vi. 20, 22, 28, 35

** 2 Chron. iii. 5.

refers to the covering of the stone walls without, "with beams and boards of cedar." But it is certain that many pillars and vessels must have been made of silver, although we have no circumstantial account of them in the general descriptions in Kings and Chronicles of the building of the temple. Otherwise we might ask, what became of the 17,000 talents of silver which David prepared for the temple?* And how could we account for the different vessels, &c., which David ordered to be made of silver?† The descriptions we have by no means enter into all the particulars of the various parts of the building, or of all the vessels it contained. And who can tell how much silver entered into the composition of the pillars and vessels which are said, both in Kings and Chronicles, to have been made of "bright brass?" In particular, the two famous pillars "Jachin and Boaz," and their complicated ornaments, must certainly have contained much silver. "The covering," or curtain of the most holy was made of purple, according to 2 Chron. iii. 14.‡ But the most interesting and wonderful part of this description of the inner sanctuary is contained in the last phrase of verse 10: "The inner part is (or, within it is) strewn with love of the daughters of Jerusalem." This language is highly metaphorical, and reminds us of the expression used by David, who, when alluding to the blissful Messianic Prophecies, said, "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart,"§ thus comparing the gracious promises of the Lord to precious seed confided to a generous soil, which is sure to produce rich fruits in due season. In this passage here it is the daughters of Jerusalem who spread or strew precious seed

* 1 Chron. xxix. 4, 7.

† 1 Chron. xxviii. 11—19.

‡ This curtain which covered the entrance into the Most Holy is called in the Hebrew מֵרָבָב (Merkav), probably because it covered or veiled the מֵרָבָבָה (Merkavah), the "chariot" or "throne"—as רָכַב (Rechev) signifies a "war chariot," or even "war horse" to ride on, and רָכָב (Rakav), the rider on the chariot or on the horse—so is the upper mill stone called רָכָב (Rechev, or "Rachav" as it may read), because of its riding as it were upon the lower. But it may be that the curtain which was embroidered without, and presented the whole pattern of what it veiled from human eye within, viz., the Ark and Cherubim, bore therefore the same name of *Merkavah*, "Chariot or Throne," as the whole did.

§ Ps. xcvi. 11.

of love in Jehovah's sanctuary, and which was to produce fruit in its appointed season, at the coming of the Messiah, in whom all nations should be blessed. Now it is certain that throughout this Song the "Daughter of Zion," or the chosen nation of Israel, is the Bride, while all other nations as her companions are represented under the name of "the daughters of Jerusalem," as we saw from the fact that the Bride was made twice to conjure the "daughters of Jerusalem" not to disturb or stir up her love until it should be ripe or perfect. The jealous Bride, however, was taken quite unawares; the watchful "daughter of Zion" allowed the "daughters of Jerusalem" to take a most active part in the building of Jehovah's sanctuary on Mount Moriah. Hiram, king of Tyre, sent thousands of his subjects to Lebanon to cut wood for the temple. The greatest artist of the same name (Hiram), who made all the sacred vessels, pillars, and ornaments, of the temple, was born of a Tyrian father. All the hundred and fifty thousand workmen employed at the building of the temple were proselytes from other nations. The sacred history informs us that "Solomon numbered all the proselytes (so we must understand גֵּרִים [geirim] to signify, and not 'strangers,' though of course they belonged to other nations, and many of them to other countries) that were in the land of Israel, . . . and they were found an hundred and fifty thousand, and three thousand, and six hundred. And he set three score and ten thousand of them to be bearers of burdens, and four score thousand to be hewers in the mountains, and three thousand six hundred overseers to set the people a-work;"* while of all Israel he employed only thirty thousand men, ten thousand of which were sent in succession to Lebanon to aid the Tyrians, and to carry the cut timber away to the place of its destination.† We thus see that, while the daughter of Zion boasted that she had found her Beloved, and brought Him into her "mother's house" (the tabernacle built by David on Mount Zion), and then into her "mother's chamber," (the temple of Solomon), the daughters of Jerusalem took a more active part in the erection of that temple, and contributed more for the purpose than she did. She prepared the gold and silver and brass, but it was Hiram the

* 2 Chron. ii. 17, 18.

† 1 Kings v. 13, 14.

Tyrian who fashioned it into plates, pillars, and vessels. She directed the work at Jerusalem, &c., but the Tyrians prepared the timber in Lebanon, and the hundred and fifty-three thousand daughters of Jerusalem laboured hard in the mountains and at Jerusalem in preparing the stones, and in the building of the temple. And this was a wonderful representation of the building of the Spiritual Temple under the New Covenant dispensation. The "daughter of Zion" prepared the materials, but the "daughters of Jerusalem" worked them into an edifice. The apostles and evangelists, as "wise architects," came forth out of Zion with the plans and patterns of the building, but the "daughters of Jerusalem," the Gentile nations who embraced the Gospel, were and are still the real builders of that temple. How important and astonishing therefore is the hint thus given by the inspired writer of the Song as to the part which the "daughters of Jerusalem" took in its erection, how they have thus "strewn their grains of love" among those of the "daughter of Zion," and which were to produce precious fruits in due time! Hence it was, that in the prayer which Solomon offered up at the dedication of his Temple, he did not forget the Gentiles, but said, "and even if a stranger, that is not of thy people Israel, shall come out of a far country for thy name's sake, . . . and pray toward this house: Hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth unto thee for; that all the people of the earth may know thy name, to fear thee as do thy people Israel," &c.*

We come now to the last verse of this chapter—a passage which has contributed much to the misunderstanding of the whole Song, inasmuch as commentators and interpreters have thought themselves obliged to acknowledge that Solomon's marriage with one of his queens must be celebrated in it. In our introduction this serious error has been fully exposed and refuted. Here we need only repeat one fact, viz., that after this verse, just as before it, the Bride and Bridegroom are still spoken of as only *espoused*, and that they remain so to the end of the Song, without their engagement being consummated by marriage. It is impossible therefore that the type should appear in a position to which

* 1 Kings viii. 41—43.

the antitype is an entire stranger, and therefore the espousals of Solomon mentioned in this verse must again have reference, not to a marriage, but to the spiritual espousal of the Divine Bridegroom and his Bride the Church, and to the renewal of the alliance and covenant between God and his people on the solemn day of the dedication of Solomon's Temple.

Solomon the *Yedidyah*, the beloved of God, the chosen type of the great Prince of Peace, who was to build the spiritual temple not made with hands—Solomon, the illustrious monarch of God's chosen people at the period in which they had reached the zenith of glory, power, and happiness—never appeared in such superhuman magnificence as on the ever memorable day of the dedication of the temple which he built to the King of kings—when the glory of the Lord filled that temple, when fire came down from heaven to consume the sacrifices on the newly dedicated altar, and when, in the midst of the astonished, praising, adoring, and rejoicing multitudes of Israel, he fell on his knees, and with his hands spread forth towards heaven, offered up that devout and beautiful prayer on behalf of Israel, the Church of the living God, which Church he so worthily represented. On that day Solomon, in the name of all Israel, solemnly and publicly renewed and confirmed the Lord's Covenant with the seed of Abraham, that he should be their Lord and their God, and they should be His chosen people and a royal priesthood, and a holy nation unto Him. This and such solemnities and ceremonies were called in Scripture language, *espousals*. Even when Moses had only rehearsed unto Israel the promises of God to His Church, and her duties and engagements towards Him, he said, "Thou hast avouched (or, espoused by promise) the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in His ways, . . . and to hearken to His voice: and the Lord hath avouched (or, espoused by promise) thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, . . . and to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour; and that thou mayest be an holy people unto the Lord thy God, as he hath spoken."* And with how much more propriety could therefore the day of the dedication of

* Deut. xxvi. 17—19.

Solomon's Temple be called "a day of espousals," *i.e.*, of the renewing and confirming of the Covenant engagements between the Lord God of Zion, and his chosen people Israel! Here we quote the concluding words of Solomon's prayer, "The Lord our God be with us, as he was with our fathers; let him not leave us, nor forsake us; that he may incline our hearts unto him, to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his statutes, and his judgments, which he commanded our fathers. . . . And let your heart be perfect with the Lord our God, to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments even as at this day."* Here we have the renewal of the Covenant, the scriptural espousals renewed between the Lord and his people whom Solomon represented not only as their king, but as the type of the great and divine Mediator between God and man; hence that day was called "the day of his (Solomon's) espousals," for he stood for all the people.

Is it asked, What is meant by the *mother* who is said to have crowned Solomon with a crown on that occasion? the solution is at hand. It is the Holy Spirit (who often appears in the feminine gender in the Hebrew), the antitype of Zion, the real spiritual mother of all regenerated children of God. When in Proverbs xxxi. 1, Solomon appears under the metaphorical name "Lemuel" (*i.e.*, with whom God is), he speaks of a prophecy which his *mother* taught him, meaning, which the Holy Spirit communicated unto him. Often Solomon calls this mother, Wisdom, and once he says, "Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. . . . Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, if thou dost embrace her. . . . She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee."† This then is the *mother*, and this the crown of glory with which she is said to have crowned Solomon, her illustrious son, at that most happy period of his building the temple of God, but especially on that most solemn day of its dedication. So we read; "And God gave unto Solomon exceeding much wisdom and understanding, and largeness of heart even as the sand that is on the sea-shore."‡ Again, "And the Lord magnified Solomon exceedingly in

* 1 Kings viii. 57—61.

† Prov. iv. 6—9.

‡ 1 Kings iv. 29.

the sight of all Israel, and bestowed on him such royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel.”* And, as we said already, never was that majesty displayed in such splendour as it was on that “day of his espousals,” when, in the name of the whole nation, he renewed the Covenant with his God and their God, in the midst of great joy, adoration, and praise. Hence it is also called “the day of the gladness of his heart,” as we read, “And King Solomon, and all the congregation of Israel that were assembled unto him before the Ark, sacrificed sheep and oxen which could not be told nor numbered for multitude. And the priests brought in the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord unto his place, to the oracle of the house, into the most holy place, even under the wings of the Cherubims. . . . And the musicians the Levites, of Asaph, of Heman, and of Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, being arrayed in white linen, having cymbals and psalteries and harps, stood at the east side of the altar, and with them an hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets. . . . And when they lifted up their voices, accompanied by the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the Lord saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord; so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God.”† It was then that Solomon began his sublime prayer; “And when Solomon ended his prayer, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt-offerings and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house. . . . And when all the children of Israel saw the fire come down, and the glory of the Lord upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever. . . . And the priests waited on their offices, and the Levites, with instruments of music of the Lord, which David the king had made to praise the Lord with; for his mercy endures for ever; so they had the praises of David in their hands, and the priests sounded trumpets before them, and all Israel stood.”‡ Now we ask what other solemn day

* 1 Chron. xxix. 25. † 2 Chron. v. 6, 7, 12—14. ‡ 2 Chron. vii. 1—3—6.

ever enjoyed by any human being, even by the most magnificent of kings, as was Solomon, could be compared to that day? or what other day could with so much propriety be called "the day of the gladness of his heart?"

But while Solomon in his capacity of King of Israel represented them on that day, and in the name of the whole Church renewed the Covenant between her and her Beloved, he was at the same time the type of the great Prince of peace, who dwelt between the Cherubim, and who, on that day, espoused anew the daughter of Zion to be His chosen and beloved Bride. When therefore we hear these daughters of Zion invited by the happy choir of Levites to behold the glory and majesty bestowed by the Holy Spirit on their King Solomon on that day, we hear them no less invited to behold the "greater than Solomon," their everlasting King who, "being the brightness of Jehovah's glory, and the express image of His person" . . . who . . . "being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they" . . . "was crowned with glory and honour," and "anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows," and who, "when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." The daughter of Zion is invited to look upon His glory and majesty, for it is she who, when faithful and true to the promises of her espousals, is herself His crown of glory. It is in reference to Zion and her daughter, the Church, that it was said, "Thou shalt be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God."* And who is it that prepares the sinful daughter of Zion to become a crown of glory to her God? It is the Holy Spirit that regenerates, washes, purifies, and sanctifies her, and then presents her to her Lord and Saviour in brightness, majesty, and honour. Therefore she says, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God: for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation; he hath covered me with a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels."†

* Is. lxii. 3.

† Is. lxi. 10.

CHAPTER IV.

ARGUMENT.

(Vv. 1—15.) The Lord is described as expressing his delight and entire satisfaction with his Bride the ancient Church, her sanctuary, and its services, under various figures and metaphors, in which also are enwrapped several important prophecies for Israel. (V. 16.) The Church prays for the Holy Spirit to breathe on her and make her produce more fruit for the honour of her Lord. (V. 17, or v. 1 of chap. v.) The Lord tells her that the old Covenant and dispensation had then reached its climax.

THE LORD.

1. Behold thou art fair, my love! (or, beloved companion),
Behold thou art fair! (or, beautiful),
Thine eyes are like doves within thy veil;*
Thy hair is like a flock of goats,
That feeding descendeth from Mount Gilead.
2. Thy teeth are like an equal-sized flock,†
Which came up from the washing-pool;
All of which have twins,
And none is bereaved among them.
3. Like the scarlet-thread are thy lips,
And thy speech is comely;
Like a slice of pomegranate
Are thy temples through thy veil.‡

* We have already remarked on chap. i. v. 15 that the expression עֵינַיִךְ יוֹנִים (Enayich yonim) can by no means bear a comparison to the dove's eyes, but to the dove itself. In the above passage, in which every figure employed is accompanied by the regular כּ comparative or particle of similitude, this figure alone is without it. All, therefore, that we can venture to supply is the כּ, and render it, "Thine eyes *are like doves*;" but to add, "like dove's eyes," is to outrage alike text and figure.

† קָצָב (Katzav) nowhere, nor in any form, signifies either "shear" or "shorn." This is the only place where the LXX., and from them the Vulgate, so rendered it; and from these lexicographers take their authority for giving to the word a meaning which it never had. As in 1 Kings vi. 25 and vii. 37, so here also, it signifies "equal size." There it refers to equal-sized cherubs and basens, and here to a chosen flock containing equal-sized lambs.

‡ תְּזָמַת (Tzamath) in this, as in verse 1, means neither "locks" nor "hair," but a thin gauze veil of net-work, which the Eastern females

4. Thy neck is like the tower of David,
Constructed for armoury ;
Whereon there hang a thousand bucklers,
All the shields of mighty men.
5. Thy two breasts are like two young fawns,
Twins of the roe, which feed among the lilies.
6. Until the day break, and the shades flee away,
I will betake me to the mountain of myrrh,
And to the hill of frankincense.

For the clearer understanding of the figures, the reference, and the thing signified in this passage, we beg the reader to keep in mind the subject of the last three verses of the preceding chapter, and what was said there regarding it—to remember that we had there the description of the inner sanctuary of Solomon's temple, in which the divine Bridegroom chose to dwell, and also an allusion to the great solemnities that took place on the day of the dedication of that temple. Now it so happened that on that day Solomon, in the name of the whole Church, said unto the Lord, "I have built an house of habitation for thee, and a place for thy dwelling for ever,"* and then, in the course of his memorable prayer, he invited the Lord to come according to his promises and dwell in that house. In answer to that prayer and invitation the Lord said, "I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself as an house of sacrifice. . . . For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever : and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually."† Every biblical student knows that the Hebrew term אֶדְוָיָם (ad

wore over their heads, and which hang over their faces. Through this scarlet veil of net-work, a white temple is beautifully described as looking like a slice of pomegranate, which looks inside like net-work (in compartments) with its bright red grains intermingled with white. Indeed we were greatly tempted to render $\text{כַּפְלֵי־הַחַרְמוֹן}$ (Kepelach harimon) "like a plate of granite stone," which we are persuaded to be its meaning, as also that of סֵלַע־הַחַרְמוֹן (Selah harimon) "The granite rock" (Judges xx. 45, 47, xx. 13, &c.), so called from the striking similitude of the granite stone, with its coloured veins and net-work appearance, and the granite apple when cut right through. But as the figure in our passage is not impaired by the usual translation, we have left it as it is in the common version.

* 2 Chron. vi. 2.

† 2 Chron. vii. 12—16.

olam) "for ever," is often used in Scripture for a certain limited period—that especially in reference to the ceremonial law it always signifies the period of that dispensation, the period during which the shadows and types of the law were to remain until the bright day should arrive when the antitype should fulfil them. And what do we see in the first six verses of this chapter? When the Bridegroom has set forth in the first five verses the perfect beauty of the Bride the Church, he adds in the 6th verse, "Until the day break, and the shades flee away" (*i.e.*, until the promised day of my appearance in the flesh, when the light of my everlasting gospel shall disperse the shades of this preparatory dispensation), "I will betake me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense." And what is that "mountain of myrrh," but Mount Zion, in which He had chosen to dwell? and what the "hill of frankincense," but Mount Moriah, with its temple, where frankincense was offered on the altar of incense, and on that of sacrifice for a sweet smelling savour unto him? Is not this verse in striking figures the exact substance of the Lord's answer to Solomon's prayer quoted above?

Now that we see that in the 6th verse we have only a poetical repetition of the Lord's answer to Solomon's prayer, and of His promise to dwell in that temple made with hands until that dispensation of types and shades should be dispersed by the gospel day, and by His appearance in the flesh, we remark farther that the figures of female beauty which Solomon put into the mouth of the Covenant Angel, must refer primarily to the temple of Solomon itself, and then to the spiritual qualities and accomplishments of the Bride the Church, for whose sake he condescended to enter and dwell in the temple which she had prepared for Him. The prophets of old frequently styled Jerusalem and Zion the "Lord's Bride," and doubtless because of the temple, "the place of His throne," which that chosen city contained. Even in Revelation, when John speaks of the spiritual and heavenly Jerusalem, "which is the mother of us all," he still calls her "the Bride of the Lamb." "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God, out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Again, the Angel said unto him, "Come hither, and I will

show thee the Bride, the Lamb's wife,"* and the reader knows what follows, viz., the description of that celestial city, of the gold, precious stones, and pearls used in its construction (all figurative of otherwise indescribable spiritual splendour), and of the divine glory manifested and abiding in it. The difference between the old and new Jerusalem is, that the glory of the former was the temple wherein the Shechinah dwelt, while the latter will have no temple, "for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." As this is neither the place, nor is it our intention, to search here for the mysteries enveloped in that portion of Revelation, we only refer to the fact, that in it Jerusalem from above is called "the Bride of the Lamb," and that her spiritual splendour is set forth under figures suitable to human ideas of the richest and most precious materials. Hence there is nothing new or surprising in the opinion which we have put forth, that the Bride whose beauty the Bridegroom describes in the first five verses of this chapter, is the ancient Church, with her newly built and dedicated temple, in which the Bridegroom promises to her to dwell. Whatever fancy may imagine with regard to the figures employed by Solomon in verses 1—5 in regard to female beauty, we are persuaded that unless we refer them primarily to the temple, though spiritually to the Church, they will neither be defensible in themselves, nor accord with the greatness of this princely author, with the usual elegance of his style, the exactness of his figures, and the strict appropriateness of his comparisons. Indeed we have no such mean idea of Solomon's choice of poetical figures as to think he would run into such impropriety and extravagance,—that in wishing simply to describe the beauty of a human head covered with tresses, he could find no other object in nature to compare it with but a vast mountain covered with goats! and that a stately and well-proportioned neck could be compared with nothing but the tower of a fortress! No, the reader will see that other things than these lie hid in these comparisons. But before we proceed with the explanation of these figures we have still one remark to make, namely, that according to the usual explanations, that nothing but the beauty of

* Rev. xxi. 2—9.

the Bride is eulogized in these five verses, is it not inexplicable that after all the compliments about her perfect beauty and rare accomplishments, which the Bridegroom lavishes upon her, He should declare to her in verse 6 that he would leave her instantly for a more pleasant entertainment which He expects on the mountain of myrrh, whatever fancy may make that mountain to signify! Is not this just as if He had said to her, "Indeed, my dear Bride, thy beauty is perfect and thy accomplishment rare, but nevertheless I prefer to spend my time in loneliness on the mountain of myrrh than to remain any longer in thy company!" But as we have proved above that in verse 6 we have the answer of the Lord to his Bride's invitations and prayer that He would come and dwell in the temple which she had prepared for Him, we easily understand how, after enumerating the beauties of His Church, her temple, and its worship, He declares to her in verse 6 that He had graciously heard her prayers, accepted of her invitation, and accordingly would go and dwell on that sacred mountain of myrrh till these shadows and types should be dispersed by the gospel day and its brighter light.

The ancient Church having attained in these days her greatest perfection and highest prosperity, her gracious Lord gave her His testimony, and in doing so He begins to praise her "eyes," as He had already done in chap. i. 15, after her humble confession of her own sinfulness and unworthiness, and of the all-sufficiency of the riches of His grace. (See our remarks on that verse.) Here also He compares her eyes to the humble, lovely, faithful and attractive dove. The same Bridegroom, the same Covenant Angel when he was in the flesh in the midst of His Church, explained that similitude, saying, "Be ye harmless as doves;"* "The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single (a quality of the dove) thy whole body is full of light;"† and an Old Testament prophet said, "When the eyes of man shall be towards the Lord, the Lord shall be seen over them."‡ Being therefore about to declare to His Bride His gracious acceptance of her invitation to come and dwell in the temple which she had dedicated to Him, He first describes her as having her eyes directed faith-

Matt. x. 16.

† Luke xi. 34.

‡ Zech. ix. 1—14

fully, tenderly, and stedfastly toward Him with^d dove-like simplicity and earnestness. At the sametime we know that the temple was the emblem of the Church of God, composed of the “lively stones” her members, which are His also, and built up into a spiritual temple in which Jehovah delights to dwell. The “eyes” of that emblem of the Church of God we suppose to have been the two perpetual fires, the one which burned continually on the great altar of sacrifice, and from which fire was taken in the mornings and evenings for the altar of incense, and the other the perpetual light which was kept burning on the candlestick. All these were placed within the temple, within the first veil, and within the walls and ceilings of the middle sanctuary. Much might be said on this subject in connection with Zechariah, chapters iii. and iv., and with several passages in Revelation, but this is not the place for it. We would only remark here in the first place, that though the Church of God was intended to be the light of the world, still under the old dispensation her light was “within the veil,” for she was not a missionary Church, and those that “sat in darkness” (the Gentiles) had to wait until that veil should be removed, when the light broke in and shone unto them. And in the second place, her dove-like eyes, the light of the temple being within the veil also signified her humility, and by the mouth of David she was therefore able to say, “Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither did I cherish great aspirations or plans, nor wonderful things that were above my stage; . . . my soul is even like a weaned child.”*

“Thy hair *looks* like a flock of goats, that feeding descendeth from Mount Gilead.” The long and glossy tresses of the Bride descending from her head, and trembling as it were upon her shoulders in walking, are compared to a flock of goats viewed from a distance, as they wave downward from mount Gilead, still feeding as they descend, and imparting a tremulous agitation to their long, silk-like and glossy wool, by their bowing their heads and plucking the grass. This must be seen to be fully appreciated. But, as we remarked above, this figure would seem disproportioned if not extravagant, if it is applied to the hair of the head only of a single person, for one of these eastern goats would

* Ps. cxxxi. See the Author's translation of that Psalm.

have answered the purpose equally well. But as this figure is intended for the ancient Church and her temple, it will be found not only proportionate but sublime. In the first place, these tresses of the Bride may represent the multitudes of believing worshippers, divided into many companies or groups, as belonging to the different tribes and families, but still to one nation, one Church, one head, some ascending and others descending mount Zion, some returning, others moving onwards to worship God in his temple. "Our feet have stood within thy gates, O Jerusalem. . . . For thither the tribes went up, the tribes of God unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord."* Again, "When I remember these things I pour out my soul in me: how I had gone with the multitude; how I went with them to the house of God with the voice of joy and praise."† Now to represent these moving groups of happy worshippers on Mount Zion, under the figure of the lovely tresses of the Bride, the Church, each of which is composed of many hairs, and, though divided into separate locks, still belonging to the same head which they adorn, is, we think, the happiest figure imaginable. No less appropriate is the comparison of these flocks of worshippers ascending and descending Mount Zion, and eagerly feeding on the worship of God and the solemnities of his temple, to the rich flocks moving on, while feeding on Mount Gilead. Moreover, this figure may represent the gold-plate covering of the roof of the temple with the shiftings and playings of the shades, and the flashes of lustre caused by the rays and reflection of an obliquely shining sun—a scene which must have been most magnificent, if viewed from the sides opposite the sun's rays. And then the comparison of it to the flocks of goats moving on with their glossy wool towards sun-set (for in mid-day there was no feeding of flocks in the East) on Mount Gilead when the oblique rays of a setting sun still played on them, producing lustre and shade at the same time, or in the early morn, when the ascending sun produced the same effect, is strikingly beautiful.

"Thy teeth are like an equal-sized flock which come up from the washing-pool; all of which have twins, and not one is bereaved among them." Here is a beautiful figure, but which will primarily agree with nothing but the magni-

* Ps. cxxii. 2, 4.

† Ps. xlii. 4.

ficent rows of chambers which Solomon had made outside along the temple walls. These chambers looked all equal-sized without, though within there was a difference in their depth or breadth, the lower row having five cubits only in depth, because the walls of the temple were thickest there; the middle row six, and the upper seven, for there were two narrowings in the walls of the temple outside, upon which the beams of the outer chambers (*i.e.*, the upper two rows) should lean.* Looking upon these rows of chambers from without, and passing the eye in a straight line, perceiving three chambers, one below the other, it could be beautifully compared to a mother ewe with her two twin lambs following her one behind the other, and so for the whole of the lines of the three chambers each. When looking again at the division of these rows as they ran on the length of the temple walls (when only two rows can be considered together), they looked like two rows of white and beautiful teeth, equal in size, and compact, one beside the other, without any gap between them, any variance, in colour, proportion, or closeness.

As regards the spiritual meaning of the Bride's teeth, they are apparently the instruments with which she eats the spiritual food, the bread of heaven and of life. In these chambers dwell the servants of the sanctuary, the priests and Levites, who under that dispensation could in more than one respect be called the teeth of the Bride, the Church, in a spiritual sense. But the spiritual teeth of the Church are also faith, hope, obedience, charity, patience, prayer, &c., "Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight herself in fatness."† In Jacob's last blessing he said of Judah, "His teeth shall be whiter than milk."‡ In a physical sense this is not only an essential condition of beauty, but also a sign of vigour, and of the healthy condition of the whole body; it must, therefore, signify the same in a spiritual sense, and shew that all the above enumerated qualities of the children of God are and must be perfect. As by these qualities they are enabled to eat all the bread of heaven graciously granted to them, and to feed their souls on all the words that proceed from

* See 1 Kings vi. 5—10.

† Is. lv. 2.

‡ Gen. xlix. 12.

the mouth of God, so they are also sure to digest well all that angel's food, and thus preserve the vigour of their souls. The whiteness and cleanliness of these teeth are also an emblem of purity. The children of God, eating only the food which He gives them, preserve their teeth white, clean, vigorous, and entire, while the wicked devouring the innocent and feeding upon every unclean thing, have their teeth like the swords and daggers of murderers stained with the blood of their victims, and which "God breaketh in their mouth" when plucking out the spoil. The prophetic figure which says, "He that eateth sour grapes his teeth shall be set on edge," has the same spiritual meaning. (Jer. xxxi. 29, 30, comp. Ezek. xxiii. and his large explanation of that figure.)

"Like the scarlet thread are thy lips, and thy speech is comely." The physical feature of beauty in this figure needs no explanation. The spiritual one of pure and beautiful lips uttering comely speeches is largely explained in Scripture; "The lips of the righteous feed many;" "The lips of the wise disperse knowledge;" "The lips of knowledge are a precious jewel;"* "The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious;"† "With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth;" "My lips shall utter thy praise;" "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips" ("or with the lips of nightingales.")‡ But in this passage the figure may allude to the two scarlet curtains in the temple, the one before the Holy, and the other before the Most Holy Place, and which were to the temple, in more than one sense, what lips are to the mouth. The outer curtain was open at the time of Divine worship, that the multitude without might hear the sweet and comely voices of the priests and Levites, and join in the praise and adoration of the great King of Zion. And not only so, but of Levi it is said, "The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips. . . . For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth;" (for he is delivering his

* Prov. x. 21, xv. 7, xx. 15. † Ecc. x. 12.

‡ Ps. cxix. 13—171, lxxiii. 5.

message by the comely speech of the Urim and Thummim,) "for he is the messenger (angel) of the Lord of Hosts."* The inner curtain was only open once a year, when the high-priest entered the Most Holy Place, and having made the atonement before the mercy-seat, declared to the Church that according to the Lord's promise (Lev. xvi. 30) reconciliation was effected, and that she was cleansed from all her sin before the Lord.

"Like a slice of pomegranate are thy temples through (or within) thy veil." The head and especially the temples were regarded by the ancients as the seat of thought, discretion, resolution, excellency, knowledge, nobility of character, judgment, &c. The veil here spoken of was a gauze veil of network composed of silks of lively colours, and through it the pure white temples looked like the granite-apple when cut right through in the middle; for its kernels or grains of beautiful red and white are compactly confined in different little chambers, or compartments like that of the honey-comb, and these divisions look like net-work. (See our note on the text, pp. 179.) But we presume that this figure refers to the decoration of the two brazen pillars, the famous Jachin and Boaz which stood on each side of the entrance of the porch of Solomon's temple, and which were decorated on their heads or tops with two chapitres and "nets of checker-work, and wreaths of chain-work, and rows of pomegranates." (See 1 Kings vii. 15—22.) Such like decorations were likewise on the upper post of the entrance to the Most Holy. And this will appear more evident as the next figure we shall see refers to the tower of the same porch of Solomon's temple.

"Thy neck is like the tower of David, constructed for an armoury; whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all the shields of the mighty men." We know that as soon as David became king over all Israel, his first act was to go up to Jerusalem with the whole of his army and attack the strong fortress and castle which the Jebusites held on Mount Zion, which had resisted the conquering army of Joshua and maintained themselves in it to the very days of David, into whose power, however, it fell at last by the skill and vigour of his general Joab, and of his valiant army. Of this

fortress David took immediate possession, and dwelt in it until his cedar-palace was ready, the materials of which Hiram king of Tyre furnished to him. Around it he built a city which was from him called "the city of David."* Whether David himself built that high tower on the castle which he took from the Jebusites, or whether the tower had been there before, but (like the fortress) was called by his name because he conquered it after many centuries of resistance, is nowhere mentioned, and is of no consequence to us. Of one thing we are sure, that in ancient times every fortress had a more or less elevated tower within it, on which were hung round about it shields and bucklers and different instruments of war, in order to overawe any approaching enemy, by shewing him the instruments of warfare by which he must expect to be met, and their size and weight to impress on him the strength of the warriors who would wield them. Even in time of peace these imposing demonstrations served to shew to foreigners and itinerant merchants the strength of the nation and the place, so that on their return to their own countries, they might tell their fellow citizens of the munitions of war and the powerful warriors they had seen on the fortresses, castles, and towers of the nations and towns through which they passed. The prophet Ezekiel, in his sublime description of the glory and power of ancient Tyre, of the enormous riches which she had accumulated by her commercial enterprises on distant seas and isles, and of her mercenary armies, while she was herself but a small and insignificant place, says, "Persians, Lydians, and Phutians were in thine army, thy men of war: shield and helmet they hanged in thee; they enhanced thy beauty. The men of Arvad with thine army were upon thy walls round about, and the Gammadim were in thy towers: they hanged their shields upon thy walls round about; they have perfected thy splendour.†

But Zion's strength was not to be measured by the number or the size of the bucklers and shields hung upon the tower of David; for her real strength was in the Lord God of Zion, "Happy art thou, O Israel, who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who

* See 1 Chron. xi. 4—8, and comp. 2 Sam. iv. 6—12.

† Ezek. xxvii. 10, 11.

is the sword of their excellency!"* It was not the tower and castle of David that was to strike fear and awe into the heart of Israel's enemies, but it was the high tower of the porch of the Temple built on Mount Moriah unto the great God of Israel, and which shewed to the nations that the God of Zion dwelt in the midst of His people, "And all the nations of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord, and they shall be afraid of thee."† David's hope was surely not in the thousand mighty men, nor his confidence in their shields and bucklers which hung on the tower of his castle, but it was God and God alone, who was his fortress, his shield, and his sword. "We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." "The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high-tower."‡ Again, "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the Great King. God is known in her palaces as a refuge."§ The neck of the Bride, therefore, in its primary reference is nothing but the high-tower of a hundred and twenty cubits on the porch of Solomon's temple which, standing on Mount Moriah, was seen from a great distance. This "neck" or high-tower of the temple is compared to, or rather contrasted with, the high-tower of the castle of David, "which was built for an armoury," and on which a thousand shields of mighty warriors were hung up to shew forth the physical strength and resources of the nation. But this comparison and contrast is intended to indicate that the Bride's strength and splendour was far more powerfully displayed by the tower of her temple, though not one weapon of war was to be seen on it, than by the thousand shields and bucklers of the warriors which hung on the tower of David; for the former indicated the presence of the great and living God, who is the surest refuge, strength, and shield of his people, while the latter might easily be rivalled or surpassed by any heathen nation more numerous, more warlike and richer in resources. But regarding

* Deut. xxxii. 29. † Deut. xxviii. 10. ‡ Is. xxvi. 1—xviii. 2.

§ Ps. xlvi. 1—3.

the temple of God it was said, "Because of thy temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto thee. . . . O God, thou art terrible out of thy sanctuary; the God of Israel is he that giveth strength and power unto his people."* At the same time it is easily perceived that, in as far as this figure refers to the Church of God in a spiritual sense, it represents the Church militant as provided "with the whole armour of God," by which she is enabled to fight victoriously all her enemies. And as the neck supports the head, so the Lord, by the means of that holy armour, enables her to "lift her head above all her adversaries round about her," and to go on from strength to strength until she comes to the heavenly Zion to repose there for ever and ever in the bosom of her beloved Bridegroom and Saviour.

"Thy two breasts are like two young fawns, twins of the roe, which feed among the lilies." In the former four verses the spiritual qualities of the Church set forth under the figures of beauty of the Bride, were such as had respect only to herself and her own salvation. Her eyes of faith and hope; her tresses, or companies of worshippers on Mount Zion; her teeth, or the spiritual instruments for eating and digesting the bread of heaven and of life; her temples full of exalted thoughts and meditations on the majesty, greatness, holiness and goodness of her God; her lips full of praise and adoration of the divine source of her salvation; all which, united in one sanctified head, she supports and preserves by a stately neck, adorned with "the whole armour of God," by which she fights and conquers all her spiritual enemies, the powers of darkness. But even the ancient Church, though not essentially a missionary church, has not received all these divine graces and spiritual qualities, only to disappear with the death of the individual believers—she has not received these talents to bury them in the ground, and only restore them when demanded from her. No; she too was not to remain a barren woman, and spend all the bread of heaven for herself, but to turn part of that angel's food into milk and feed with it the tender babes, and nourish her young lambs, training them up in "the nurture and admonition of God." This most important quality of the Church of God, to bring up a spiritual gene-

* Ps. xlvi. 29—35.

ration in her turn, to feed her young with the same food which she receives from above, is set forth in the above passage under the most appropriate and natural figure.

We have already explained, in chapter i. ver. 13, where the Bride said, "a bundle of myrrh is my Beloved unto me, he will abide between my breasts," that this referred to the Lord's promises to abide between the Cherubim on the mercy-seat, in the tabernacle which she built for Him in the wilderness. In the 5th verse of this chapter the same figure is used by the Bridegroom to designate the same Ark and mercy-seat between the Cherubim in Solomon's temple, as it then did in the tabernacle. The figure is not only very appropriate because of the situation of the Cherubim, but because in the Ark there were the two tables, and the book of Moses laid up beside it, in regard to which the Bride was thus enjoined, "And these things which I command thee this day shall be upon thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down and when thou risest up."* Here is indicated the Bride's quality as mother, and duty as teacher in her turn, and here we see also the full signification of the figure as regards the Most Holy Place with the Ark and Cherubim. The latter are compared to two twin fawns, feeding among the lilies, and covered from the view of man save when they lift their heads above the lilies or put them out at some opening, so the Cherubim were entirely veiled from the view of man, and their presence was only indicated by their similitudes being carved on the walls and embroidered on the curtains.

Such then were the qualities of the ancient Church under the Old Testament dispensation, which, at the time of the dedication of Solomon's temple, had reached its highest perfection. She was not to be a missionary Church. She was not called upon to put on her sandals and go from country to country, from isle to isle, and preach the Gospel unto every creature, as was the destiny of the Christian Church described in the seventh chapter of this Song, and where—verse 2d—her quality as a missionary is set forth as the first and chief, as we shall see there, but her call

* Deut. vi. 6, 7.

was to be a distinct and national Church, in a certain and outward sense, confined to the seed of Abraham after the flesh, to the chosen people according to the promise. While her duty was to impart the knowledge of her God, and teach His laws and statutes to her own children—to feed her lambs among the lilies of divine truth, she was not the Church destined to be the instrument by which the promises to the Gentiles in the Messiah were to be fulfilled, but while feeding her young among the lilies, was to be veiled from the view of all other nations. The temple on Mount Moriah, with its complicated services, shadows, and types, proclaimed this to be the nature and destiny of that Church. But however imperfect that dispensation was compared to the Christian or Messianic dispensation, it reached at that time all the demanded qualifications and conditions according to the Lord's own testimony, it therefore behoved Him to fulfil His promise and make that dispensation glorious by His presence in the sanctuary which the Church had prepared for Him. This is exactly what the Lord declared in verse 6, saying, "Until the day break and the shades flee away, I will betake me (or render myself), to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense," which, as we already observed, means, that until the bright day of His appearance should arrive, when these mere shadows and types would be dispersed and superseded by the clear and brilliant light of the Gospel, He would, according to His promise, go and dwell on that mountain of myrrh—on His chosen and beloved Mount Zion, and on the hill of frankincense—in the temple on the hill Moriah, where a sweet-smelling savour awaited Him continually from both its altars. This is exactly the substance of the gracious answer which the Lord gave to Solomon's prayer on the day of the dedication, saying: "I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself as an house of sacrifice" (*i.e.* where the shadows and types shall shew forth my great sacrifice until I come to accomplish it.) . . . For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually."* We have repeated the explanation of verse 6, with the illustra-

* 2 Chr. vii. 12—15.

tive passages twice, because of its great importance, and because of the light it casts upon the whole subject of the Song, as well as on the period in which it was composed. One remark more. Towards the end of the second chapter, where the Bride was informed of the temporary absence of her Beloved, who was no more to accompany her in the visible pillar of cloud (see our exposition on verses 10—17 of that chapter), though He promised to protect and guide her still invisibly, the Church then called that time “the night of shadows,” and prayed her Beloved to be near her to protect her in every danger “until the day break, and the shades flee away;” the very language used by the Bridegroom in verse 6 of this chapter to designate the whole of the old dispensation, including the time in which the Shechinah dwelt between the Cherubim! This shows clearly that what the ancient Church called “day,” in comparison with the night of the absence of her Beloved from the visible pillar, and from between the Cherubim, the Lord and Bridegroom called “night,” in comparison with the bright daylight of the New Covenant dispensation. And so it was in fact. The ancient Church had her supposed brightest day at the period of the dedication of Solomon’s temple, while to the New Covenant Church that boasted day of light is but like the obscurity of the setting sun, or rather like the reflected light of the moon by night. But while she now enjoys the morning rays of the Sun of Righteousness, she waits still in hope for the noonday glory of Christ’s second coming, when not only the shades of night but also the shades of day shall equally disappear, and when her sun shall remain in all His beauty and splendour in the midst of heaven, and never set throughout the infinite eternity.

7. Thou art all fair, my love (or below. comp.),
And there is no spot (or defect) in thee.
8. With me from Lebanon, O my Bride!
With me from Lebanon shalt thou come;
Thou shalt look down from the top of Amanah,—
From the top of Shenir and Hermon;
From the habitation of lions,
From the mountains of panthers.

When the divine Bridegroom was treading the mountains

of Israel, going from place to place and doing good, and when one of Jacob's sons arrogantly maintained that he had scrupulously fulfilled the whole law of God, even from his very youth, and that he wished to do more (*i.e.*, to outdo the law of God), the divine teacher who saw the plague in that erring soul, said to him, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow me."* Now if there be any difference between these two passages of Scripture, that difference lies in the circumstances of the persons addressed, but the meaning of the former, although highly figurative, owing to the nature of the Song, is the same as the latter. The rich and zealous Pharisee (and surely he had a great zeal for God and His law, though not according to knowledge), imagines that by the works of the law alone he could go on to perfection, and being rich, and able, and willing to give something to the poor, he thought that he loved the Lord with his whole heart, and his neighbour as himself. But when he was put to the test of perfect obedience, his golden fancy became dross. He was laid upon the balance of self-denying love and found wanting. But though the circumstances, or moral condition of the Church at the stage referred to in this passage, was quite different, according to the Lord's own testimony, still the instruction that was afterwards given to one of her erring children as a corrective, was given to herself in this passage as a preventative or preservative. Israel, as a Church under a preparatory dispensation of shadows and types, had then reached the highest degree of perfection in regard to the accomplishment of the ceremonial law, and to her moral disposition; but in reality there was no perfection in that perfection (if we may use such an expression), for even a perfect shadow or type is yet very far from being perfect light and substance. The law, as a schoolmaster for preparing the Church towards her higher destiny, had then finished his class of primary education, which, on examination, was approved of by the Lord himself as perfect in its nature, but the higher studies of the Church for her higher spiritual education, so far from being finished, then only began. This her Beloved indicated to her in verses 7 and 8.

* Matt. xix. 16—22.

Now, if we keep in mind that after all the expressions of admiration and high approbation addressed by the Bridegroom to His Bride in the first five verses of this chapter, He told her in verse 6, that He would only remain in the temple built with hands until the spiritual and perfect dispensation came to disperse the shades and mere figures of the present and preparatory dispensation, then we may explain the contents of verses 7 and 8 by the following paraphrase: "True, as regards the present dispensation, all the shadows and types are fairly represented, and there is no defect in them; the schoolmaster is established and does his work well. 'Thou art all fair my love, and there is no spot (or defect) in thee.' Thy temple is beautiful, and corresponds exactly to my orders and patterns delivered to David regarding it; thy faith, hope, and confidence in my promises are strong and praiseworthy; thy priests and Levites at the altar and in the sanctuary show forth my coming in the flesh, my death and atonement, resurrection and mediation, to perfection; their praises and adoration, thy burnt-offerings and incense, are a sweet smelling savour unto me. But, O my betrothed Bride, all these are only the preparations for better things; 'if thou wilt be perfect,' and make progress in thy spiritual career, thou must prepare for the higher classes of thy education. Thou must soon leave these outwardly beautiful and attractive scenes of this temporary sanctuary, fragrant with the goodly cedars of Lebanon and all its sacrificial beasts, on thine altars, and follow me in the spiritual way of perfection, which I shall trace unto thee. In doing so thou wilt meet with difficulties, trials, sufferings, and dangers without number. Instead of looking down from Mount Zion in perfect safety and full of joy, thou wilt have to look down from desert mountains and wild cliffs, full of the habitations of lions, with caves of panthers, as are Amana, Shenir, and Hermon; but this is the only way to eternal glory, when, like me, thou shalt be made perfect by suffering, and thus worthy of the Captain of thy salvation."

Here again we must remind the reader that when the Lord prepared His Church for His temporary absence, from the time of the disappearance of the pillar of cloud, to His reappearance in the temple, He told her that whenever she should find herself in the "clefts of the rocks," in difficulties and dangers, to let "Him hear her voice," to call on His

name in prayer and supplication, and that He would then come to her deliverance (see chap. ii. 14, and explanation.) But in this passage He tells her that before the dispensation of shadows would be changed into the bright Messianic day, she would have to pass through far greater dangers, afflictions, and trials, that on the wild mountains of her captivity she would be exposed to and surrounded by the Babylonian lions, and Chaldean panthers, as the prophet said, "Israel is a scattered flock, the lions have driven him away; first the King of Assyria hath devoured him, and last this Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, hath broken his bones."* And the prophet Nahum, speaking of the destruction of Nineveh, said, "where is the dwelling of the lions, and the feeding-place of the young lions? . . . The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ravin."† Thus we see that in verse 8 Israel's captivity and sufferings were foretold, and also the reason for them, namely, to promote their refinement, as is said by the prophet Isaiah in the name of the Lord, "Behold, I have refined thee, but not like silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction."‡ But at the same time the Lord gave her a hint that even then in her severest sufferings, He would be with her, and not allow her to be consumed; this is indicated in the phrase, "Come with me," twice repeated."§

9. Thou hast cherished me, my sister, my Bride;
 Thou hast cherished me with one of thine eyes—
 With one chain of thy neck.||

* Jer. i. 17. † Na. ii. 11, 12. ‡ Is. xlvi. 10.

§ Of the wild mountains mentioned in verse 8, as full of lions' dens and caves of panthers, Amana is not precisely known at present. But from its being coupled with Shenir and Hermon, which are both the name of the same mountain with its various cliffs and peaks (see Deut. iii. 8, 9.) Amana may therefore belong to the same range of mountains in the Anti-Lebanus. As there was a great and sudden change to those who, from a delightful ramble on mount Lebanon, ventured to go and explore the wild regions of Anti-Lebanus, where they were exposed to great danger from the wild inhabitants of its dens, the figure is thus taken and applied to the future captivity, when the Jews were driven from their delightful Mount Zion and led into Babylon, whose fierce inhabitants, because of the fury, slaughter, and dispersion perpetrated by them on many nations, were compared by the prophets to devouring lions.

|| "Thou hast cherished me," &c. There can be no doubt that

10. How delightful is thy love, my sister, my Bride !
 How much better is thy love than wine !
 And the smell of thine ointments than all spices !
11. Thy lips, O Bride, drop as honeycomb ;
 Honey and milk are under thy tongue,
 And the smell of thy garments is like the smell
 of Lebanon.

The apostle Paul, after having passed in review the cloud of witnesses, who lived and died by faith notwithstanding all their tribulations, adversities, and sufferings, and desir-

לִבָּבָנִי (Libavtani—with τ under the \aleph ; for it is incorrectly pointed with \aleph), is taken from the Noun \leq (Lev.) "heart." It is well known that in Scripture language, strength and weakness, fear and courage, sorrow and joy, love and hatred, thought and resolution, &c., &c., are all ascribed to the heart of man, which being impressed by the subjects seen with the eyes, or heard with the ears, deliberates upon them and makes resolutions according to the strength of the impression. Hence the frequent and manifold expressions, "steal the heart—speak to the heart—discourage the heart"—a "willing or fainting heart"—heart full of mischief, of sorrow, of wisdom, of joy, of tenderness or hardness, of devices and deceit, of love and affection, of discernment and knowledge,—and hundreds of others. These impressions were understood to be made on the heart either by what the eyes saw, as "The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart" (Pro. xv. 30), "When he seeth thee he will be glad in his heart" (Ex. iv. 14), "When Pharaoh saw respite he hardened his heart" (Ex. viii. 15), and "When Joseph's brethren saw their silver in their sacks, their hearts failed them" (Gen. xlii. 28),—so "lofty eyes and a haughty heart" are always coupled together,—or by the hearing of the ear, as "Nabal's heart died within him" when he heard to what danger his folly had exposed him (1 Sam. xxv. 37), "Lest he see with his eyes, and hear with his ears, and understand with his heart" (Is. vi. 10). Lastly, sincerity or insincerity was also expressed by the heart. When Jehu found Jehonadab, he asked him, "Is thine heart right (*i.e.*, well inclined) as my heart is with thy heart" (2 Kings x. 15.)

Now our verb *Libavtani*, coming from *Lev*, "heart," has the same force as if in the English language "heart" should be used as a verb, and, like *love*, the verb from *love* the Noun, would signify to affectionate one, if there were such an expression, or "to love one with the whole heart." In the German, the Noun *heart*, *Herz*, has a verb *Herzen*, meaning, "to press one to the heart," as a sign of sincere love; and in that language our word might be rendered, "Du hast mich geherzt," which, if put literally into English, would be, "Thou hast hearted me." Thus the reader will see that we had no other choice but between "Thou hast affectionated me," or "Thou hast cherished me," and we have chosen the latter as the most proper of the two. The reader will also observe, from the above quotations, how the cherishing of the heart is combined with the eyes. The common rendering of the word by "Thou hast ravished my heart," is to ravish the real meaning of the word, and give it one it never had nor can have.

ous to persuade and prepare the Church of Hebrew believers "to run with patience the race" which their Saviour had traced unto them, said, "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin."* The Bridegroom of our Song, desirous to prepare the Bride, his Church, for the great change which the New Testament dispensation was to introduce—when the ceremonial law was to be superseded by the everlasting gospel and its purely spiritual doctrines—the visible temple built with hands, by that built invisibly by the Spirit of God,—the typical blood of sprinkling of bulls and rams, by the precious blood of the Lamb of God, "that speaketh better things than that of Abel,"—the pontifical garments of the high-priests, by the spotless robe of righteousness of Him who was to be High-priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek,—the sacred ointments of the temple, by the powerful influences and unction of the Holy Spirit,—and the solemn processions of the tribes to Mount Zion changed into the awful procession and scene at Calvary, whither the Church was to follow her Head, "without the gate bearing his reproach;"—we say, when the divine Bridegroom was desirous to prepare His Bride for the extraordinary change that was to accompany her spiritual progress, He told her that hitherto, and after all that she had done to please Him, she had only "cherished Him with one of her eyes, with one chain of her neck," a wonderful expression, which speaks for itself without any comment. But we cannot leave the subject without some observations.

1st, In making that declaration to her, O what tenderness! what infinite compassion does He display! How wonderfully does He clothe the unexpected intimation in the most comforting and cheering expressions not hitherto made use of! "Thou hast cherished me, my sister, my Bride" (or "my sister-bride")—an expression of the most tender endearment, while it indicates at the same time His matchless condescension and determination to become like her in all things (except sin), "flesh of her flesh, bone of her bones," to leave for a time the bosom of His Father, where angels and seraphim adored Him in eternity, to descend to this earth in the shape of sinful flesh, and to humble Himself unto death on the cross; and all this for her, for His beloved Bride, for His dear Church, "that he might present

* Heb. xii. 4.

it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”* 2d, We have seen in this chapter how the Bridegroom told His Bride that he would abide in the temple built with hands only until the shadows and types should be dispersed by the gospel day, and that before that great change should take place she would have to leave the lovely scenes of Lebanon, and to go into the wild regions of Amana and Hermon, among the habitations of lions and panthers; and now He tells her the reasons why she would have to undergo so many dangers and hardships before she would be taken away from the tuition of her schoolmaster (the law), and made free and perfect under the tuition of the Holy Spirit, and by the sprinkling of the blood of the new covenant. “Hitherto,” says the divine Bridegroom, “thou hast cherished me, known, esteemed, and loved me with but one of thine eyes,” *i.e.*, with the eye of the law, with the eye of works; for, “The law is not of faith; but, the man that doeth them shall live in them”†—with the eye of carnal commandments, of ceremonial exercises, and under the rod of Moses. And as were thy services, so were thy expectation of reward. Carnal blessings (the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth) for the fulfilment of carnal commandments, while thou art all the time under the curse of that which thou triest to observe. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse. . . . But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident; for, “The just shall live by faith.”‡ Hitherto thou hast cherished me with one of thine eyes, while with the other thou didst cherish earthly splendour, perishing magnificence, outward ceremonial pomp; and while thou hast sacrificed for my service one of the chains, or bracelets, of thy neck, thou art not yet in a state of mind to part with every thing, even with thy life for my sake. But all this was only in preparation for better things to come, when thou shalt love and cherish me with both thine eyes of perfect obedience and faith—when, instead of giving me one chain of thy neck for the building of a material temple, thou wilt present thyself wholly unto me, body and soul,

* Eph. v. 27.

† Gal. iii. 10, 11.

‡ Gal. iii. 12.

in order to be built up into a spiritual, living, and glorious temple, in which the everlasting God shall dwell for ever."

Verses 10 and 11 follow in explanation of verse 9, "How delightful is thy love, my sister, my Bride!" It was to make that love perfect by faith alone that the New Covenant dispensation was destined to supersede the old. It was obedience and not sacrifice, pure love and not ceremony, spirit and not words (letter), eternity and not time, that were to be introduced, taught, and established by Christ's coming in the flesh, His doctrines, sacrifice, atonement, resurrection, and everlasting gospel; and it is this spiritual, pure, and entire love that Christ declares he likes better than the wine poured on the altar of sacrifice. It is this ointment produced by the unction of the Spirit that He prefers to all the spices offered on the altar of incense. It is the prayers and praises of His Church, the testimony of martyrs, and the preaching of the glad tidings of salvation, produced by such divine love, that our Saviour eulogizes in such glowing language, saying, "Thy lips, O Bride, drop as honeycomb; honey and milk are under thy tongue." It is regarding the precious garments of His righteousness, in which the New Testament Church is clothed, that He says, "And the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon." All this was to be accomplished along with a later prophecy, which says that the ancient Church, reduced to the condition of a wilderness during the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity, was again to rejoice and blossom as the rose; "She shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the splendour of Lebanon shall be given unto her the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; they shall behold the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God."* The same is further foretold in the following passage.

12. An enclosed garden is my sister, my Bride;
A spring shut up, a fountain sealed.
13. Thy tender plants are an orchard of pomegranates,
With delightful fruit, cypress and spikenard;
14. Spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon,
With all kinds of frankincense-trees;
Myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices.

* Is. xxxv. 12.

15. A fountain for gardens, a well of living waters,
And whose streams come from Lebanon.

The connection of this passage with the preceding portion of this chapter is so clear and evident that on its very surface it is seen to be the continuation of the Bridegroom's declaration regarding what His Bride the Church then was, and what she was destined to become in the future. To us the metaphor of comparing the Church to a garden is well known from such inspired songs as that of Isaiah v., "The Song of my Beloved regarding his vineyard. . . . For the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah the plantation of his delights." The same Bridegroom, when on earth, said, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman,"* which figure the great apostle adopted when he said, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase . . . ye are God's husbandry."† Though the Lord of all, the Creator and only proprietor of the universe, "whose is the earth and the fulness thereof," has many gardens, orchards, and plantations for His glory and delight, at the period which this chapter celebrates Israel was on earth the only "enclosed garden" of the Lord, separated by the high wall of the law from all other plantations, "a peculiar people, an holy nation, a royal priesthood," a people dwelling by themselves, and not numbered among the Gentile nations. The heathen prophet saw that when he sang, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign-aloes, which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar-trees beside the waters. He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted."‡ In this passage we also see that the value, the beauty, and the riches of the garden of the Lord are greatly enhanced by being represented as having its own fountains and wells streaming with refreshing waters; because, standing in no need of waters brought from a distance, it has nothing to fear

* John xv. 1.

† 1 Cor. iii. 6. 9.

‡ Num. xxiii. 5—7.

from any time of drought. In this passage the "enclosed garden," and "the fountain of living waters sealed up," are seen coupled together, and praised separately, the reason of which we shall presently see in the spiritual meaning and substance of these comprehensive and beautiful figures.

"An enclosed garden is my sister, my Bride." It is for the following reasons that a garden is enclosed within high walls; because of the tenderness and preciousness of the plants it contains, that neither the wind, nor the wild beasts, nor man, may be able to injure them in any way—that no seeds of any wild and fruitless plants may be carried in, and scattered in the soil, and spring up, and absorb the strength of the precious plants, and that no passers by may be able to pluck its delicious fruit, but that it may be preserved till ripe for the proprietor alone. All these motives the heavenly Husbandman had for enclosing His precious garden, with its tender plants (the Jewish Church at her outset), with the high partition wall of the law, in order to preserve it and its fruits for His own glory. As long as that garden remained within that wall, it so prospered that the Psalmist could sing regarding it, "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt; thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it. Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. The hills were covered with its shadow, and the boughs thereof were like mighty cedars." But when through her own faults and neglect this partition-wall fell in ruins, when she broke down the wall of the law, and the Lord in His righteous judgments removed from her the wall of His almighty protection, then the same singer changed his harp into lamentations, saying, "Why hast thou then broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her? The bear out of the wood doth waste her, and the wild beast of the field devoureth her."*

But the Church of old was not only the Lord's enclosed garden, she was also an "enclosed spring," a "sealed fountain." The garden was provided with a fountain of her own, and with rich springs of living waters, but all for herself. Enclosed with her within the high wall of the law, its waters served to feed her own thirsty plants exclusively,

* Ps. lxxx. 8—15.

and not a single drop was allowed to flow out to refresh the plantations without perishing from drought. The Lord's promises to that Church were, "The Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones, and thou shalt be like a well watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not,"* but all this was for herself, no other nation having any share in these blessings; for she was not a missionary church, but "an enclosed garden," with a rich, yea, an exhaustless spring, but "sealed up."

In verses 13 and 14, the Lord proceeds to enumerate the different precious plants which His garden contained, all famous for beauty, and for fragrance in themselves, as well as for their delightful fruits. This figure by which the children of God are compared to goodly plants, is no stranger to us. "But I," said David, "am like a green olive-tree in the house of God."† "The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree: he shall grow like the cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing."‡ In our Song almost all the plants mentioned are odoriferous; for the Bridegroom was then on the "mountain of myrrh," "on the hill of frankincense," in the temple of Mount Moriah, filled with sweet smelling savours materially and spiritually, from the altars, and from the souls of the saints whose praises and adoring songs penetrated the veil more quickly than the strongest incense, and to whom the calves of their lips were more agreeable than all the perfumes, and the morning and evening sacrifices.

But the Church of God was not destined to remain always shut up within that partition-wall of the law—that garden of God was not to remain always enclosed—that rich fountain of living water was not to remain always sealed up from the view and use of other nations. This the Bridegroom indicates in verse 15. His fountain then sealed up is destined to become "A fountain for (many) gardens; a well of living waters (no more shut up), and whose streams came from Lebanon." The then enclosed nursery with her tender plants is to provide the whole earth with goodly

* Is. lviii. 11.

† Ps. lli. 8.

‡ Ps. xcii. 12—14.

plants and trees of righteousness—the then sealed up fountain is to pour forth mighty streams of living waters in all directions, and change the wilderness of the hitherto fruitless nations into an Eden, and the desert-like tribes of the earth into a garden of God; “In the days to come, Jacob shall take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.”* And, therefore, when the same prophet compared the Old with the New Testament Church, he says, in the name of God, “Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old: Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.”†

THE CHURCH.

16. Awake, O north wind! and come thou south!
Blow on my garden, that its spices may flow out;
Let my Beloved come in into His garden,
And eat the fruits of His delights.

THE LORD.

17. I am come into my garden, my sister, my Bride;
I gather my myrrh with my spice;
I eat my honey-comb with my honey;
I drink my wine with my milk;
Eat, O companions, and drink,
Yea, drink abundantly, O beloved friends.

In this beautiful passage we remark, first of all, how clearly, how forcibly, and how plainly, figure and substance are developed, without leaving the least shadow of doubt about the subject celebrated in this holy Song. Who else and what other subject in the world could be so pliable to these various figures but the Church of God in relation to her Lord and Saviour? She alone can properly be compared to a precious garden enclosed, containing many and different valuable plants. She alone can be spoken of as

* Is. xxvii. 6.

† Is. xliii. 18, 19.

the Lord's garden, and her fruits as the Lord's fruits. She alone can bear the frequent shiftings of the figure, in being herself the *garden*, and saying, "My garden," and yet being still at the same time the Lord's garden; for she and her fruits belong unto Him who bought her with a great price, and because it is only when she remains in Him that she can produce fruits, while out of Him she continues unfruitful, her branches dry up and become fit for no other use but fuel to the fire.

In verses 12—15, the Bridegroom described the beauties of His beloved Bride under the figure of an enclosed and well watered garden which He had planted and preserved for His own delight. He also mentioned there many of the goodly trees with their delicious fruits, odoriferous plants, with the perfumed spices which that garden produced. The Bride, or the Church of God, hearing from the mouth of her Beloved that the garden which He had planted in the midst of her contained so many plants of righteousness,—love, devotion, faith, hope, praise, prayer, humility, and holiness—plants in whose odour and fruits her Lord rejoiced and delighted, she exclaims in a rapture of joy, "Awake, O north wind, and come thou south, blow on my garden that its spices may flow out," (or, "Stir up my garden, that the perfume of its spices may spread abroad.") "Let my Beloved come into His garden and eat the fruits of his delights." And what is this but the earnest prayer of the devoted Church—anxious to regale her Beloved with all the fruits of righteousness which she was intended to produce—that the Spirit of God should be granted unto her in a great measure, and that He might stir up all her graces and gifts into full activity and life, and thus enable her to produce in abundance all the fruits she was capable of for the promotion of the Lord's glory!

Let us again return for a moment to Mount Zion, and glance at it in the period to which this chapter refers, there remains not a doubt that the "enclosed garden" in its primary sense represents the temple within the walls of which no stranger, no Gentile could enter, in which the precious fruits of the ancient Church were concentrated, and whose sweet smelling savour of burnt-offerings and incense were reserved for the Lord of the temple. Hence it is that we find again the prayer and desire of the Bride as expressed

in verse 16, substantially repeated by Solomon at the end of his prayer, when he said, "The Lord our God be with us as he was with our fathers; O, let him not leave us, nor forsake us; that he may incline our hearts unto him, to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his statutes, and his judgments, which he commanded our fathers."* And if we do identify the Bride's prayer in verse 16 of our Song with that offered up by Solomon in her name at the dedication of the temple, we can equally identify the answer of the Bridegroom contained in verse 17, (a verse which has been most unfortunately distorted by ignorance, and placed at the head of chap. v., with which it has no connection whatever), with the answer made by the Lord to that prayer of Solomon, saying, "I have heard thy prayer, and thy supplication that thou hast made before me: I have hallowed this house which thou hast built, to put my name there for ever, and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually."†

With regard to the spiritual substance of the Bridegroom's answer contained in verse 17, we must consider it in connection with what He said in verse 6 of this chapter, viz., that He approved of and would dwell in that temple built with hands, on that "mountain of myrrh," until its shades and types should be dispersed and superseded by the Gospel-day. Since, for the time being, that imperfect dispensation had reached the highest stage of its perfection according to the law, the Bridegroom's answer to the earnest invitations of His Bride, was the most appropriate, saying, "I am come into my garden, my sister, my Bride"—*i.e.*, according to my promise, and thy earnest prayer, I entered the temple which thou hast built for me, and took possession of my enclosed garden. "I gather my myrrh with my spice"—*i.e.*, I reap the sweet smelling savour of thy sacrifices and incense of thine altars—"I eat my honeycomb with my honey, I drink my wine with my milk." I graciously accept thy oblations and free-will offerings, the fat offered, and the wine poured upon the altar of sacrifice. All is right now; all is in perfect order as far as the types and foreshadowing ceremonies were intended to be. The school-master (the law) has hitherto done his preparatory work

* 1 Kings viii. 57, 58.

† 1 Kings ix. 3; comp. 2 Chron. vii. 12, 15, 16.

admirably well, and the "enclosed garden" yields its fruits in its due season. "Eat, O companions, and drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved friends"—*i.e.*, Rejoice therefore, O Bride, in this thy success, reap all the spiritual benefits which are now at thy door, and within thy reach. Let thy companions, the servants of the sanctuary, live upon the sanctuary. Let thy priests be clothed in righteousness, and thy saints (thy beloved friends) shout for joy. Go then on from strength to strength; continue to augment the talents which I have confided to thee, until I come to finish the plan of salvation, and show thee more precious things for which thou art destined.

This metaphorical way of representing the spiritual joy and satisfaction of the children of the kingdom, when they grow in grace and in the knowledge of God, and are in full communion with the Holy Spirit, under the figure of eating and drinking, is not unfrequent in the Scriptures. David, in giving reasons for the ardent desire of his soul after the sanctuary of the living God, says: "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness."* Again: "Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts; we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple."† Even when the prophet Isaiah invites, in the name of the Lord, all those that hunger and thirst after happiness, to come to the freely offered New Covenant blessings, he says: "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye buy and eat: yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price. . . . Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight herself in fatness."‡ From these and numerous similar passages, we can easily perceive the meaning of the Lord's inviting His beloved friends and companions, as He graciously and condescendingly calls His saints, in the same language which the Psalmist used in His name when he said, "Gather my saints together unto me; even those that have made a covenant (or those that enter into covenant) with me by sacrifice,"§ to come and rejoice before him in their privileges, feed abundantly on His gracious promises, and on the rich gifts of His grace. These spiritual feastings to which the Lord invited his Church,

* Ps. lxxiii. 5. † Ps. lxxv. 4. ‡ Is. lv. 1, 2. § Ps. l. 5.

had its figure or representative in the temporal rejoicings and feasting of the Church for many days at the time of the dedication of Solomon's Temple (see 1 Kings viii. 1—41, 62—66; comp. Nehem. viii. 10.)

Here ends the historical part of the Song, which celebrates the then past history of the ancient Church, her various vicissitudes from her exodus from Egypt to the days of David, and the period of her highest prosperity and glory which she reached at the dedication of Solomon's temple, and during the first years of his peaceful reign. With the next chapter begins the prophetic part of the Song, in which is foretold the gradual fall of the Church, her punishment, captivity at Babylon, her restoration, prophecies and promises, and the coming of Messiah, and the New Covenant Church.

CHAPTER V.

PROPHETICAL PART OF THE SONG.

ARGUMENT OF CHAP. V.

(Vv. 1—7.) The ancient Church falls asleep, becomes neglectful and indifferent. The Lord comes and knocks at her door, inviting her (by His prophets) to rise, repent, and open to Him her heart and soul, but she refuses. He leaves a last threatening and warning and departs. She then begins to think of her folly and opens, but the Lord was no longer at the door. She runs through the streets of the city in search of Him, but instead of finding Him the "watchmen" find her and smite and wound her, and the "keepers of the walls" tear down her veil from her (under which figures are shadowed forth the fearful judgments upon Israel, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the Babylonish captivity.) The captive Bride then adjures the other nations that if they should find her provoked, offended, and absent Lover to tell Him of her repentance and sufferings. (V. 8.) The daughters of Jerusalem, or the nations that kept her captive, ask her about the character of her Beloved, and why she thus panted after Him, though He had forsaken her? and why she would not rather seek another? (*i. e.* serve the idols of her oppressors.) (Vv. 9—15.) The captive Bride describes the character, the glory, and divine majesty of her absent Lord, His superiority over all gods, and thus shows why she so anxiously and eagerly sought to find Him again and to regain His favour. Under these figures are foretold the efforts made by the Babylonians to turn captive Israel away from their God, but in vain; for it was that very captivity that purged the ancient Church from idols and attached her more firmly to God, and instead of the captors gaining the captives to serve idols, the latter gained the former to fear the God of Israel.

BACKSLIDING OF THE ANCIENT CHURCH.

RELATION OF THE CHURCH.

1. I was sleeping, but my heart was awake.
The voice of my Beloved! He knocketh!
Open to me, my sister, my love (or, bel. comp.),
My dove, my accomplished (or faithful) one;
For my head is filled with dew—
My locks with the drops of the night.
2. I have put off my robe—how shall I put it on?
I have washed my feet—how shall I defile them?
3. My Beloved put in His hand by the hole,
And my bowels were moved for Him.
4. I arose to open to my Beloved,
And my hands dropped with myrrh,
And my fingers with fragrant myrrh,
Passing upon the handles of the lock.
5. I opened to my Beloved,
But my Beloved had departed, and was gone;
My soul failed when He yet spake;
I sought Him but I could not find Him;
I called Him, but He gave me no answer.
6. The watchmen that went about the city found me,
They smote me, they wounded me;
The keepers of the walls took off my veil from me.
7. I adjure you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem,
If you find my Beloved—ye do tell him
That I languish with love (or, faint for).

In this passage, as in chap. iii. 1—5, the sacred poet makes the Bride relate her own history in regard to certain important events which came to pass in the course of her spiritual alliance with the God of Abraham—with the Saviour of souls. In both places she relates past events. But the difference is this, that while the events related by the Bride in chap. iii. 1—5, were actually *past events* at the time of Solomon's composing this Song, those which he makes her relate in this chapter as events gone by, were then *events yet to come*, but clearly and circumstantially foretold by the Spirit of prophecy, to whom the distant future is as

naked and open as the past or the present. Hence while explaining the four preceding chapters, we had to search that portion of sacred history which relates events that had taken place long before, or at the commencement of Solomon's reign; but in order to explain the passage before us, and the whole of the following part of the Song, we must examine those portions of the Scriptures which were written after Solomon's reign, and in which the fulfilment of the prophetic part of the Song is, directly or indirectly, related. It is easily seen that in the present chapter we have the relation of the backsliding and falling away of the ancient Church—the Church, that had reached the highest degree of spiritual as well as temporal prosperity towards the middle of Solomon's reign, at the period of the dedication of his temple. But it is the particulars related here by the mourning and humbled Bride, that require to be explained and illustrated, and this we shall now endeavour to do, imploring the aid of God.

Abrupt and melancholy as is the transition into which this chapter plunges us, without warning or preface, there is a sublimity in the very beginning of the Bride's narrative which must be felt; it cannot be described. "I was sleeping,"—humble confession! comprehensive avowal! lamentable change! deplorable condition! The Bride of the ever-watching Covenant Angel fell asleep! The Church of the living God, described in the preceding chapter by the divine Bridegroom Himself, as without spot or blemish, a perfection of beauty, a fruitful garden, an exhaustless fountain of living waters, fell asleep! That Church, who only a short time before was full of zeal and devotion, and who, in ardent love to her Lord and Master, invoked the Holy Spirit to come and stir up all her graces and faculties to enable her to produce all the various and precious fruits of righteousness for the honour and glory of her Beloved, has she fallen asleep? has she allowed the oil of her lamp to fail, the light of her candlestick to go out, her zeal to become cold, her faith to wither, her crown to fade, and her hope to die? Alas! the "men of God," by whose prophecies we must try to illustrate the passage before us, speak of that deplorable event in language of astonishment and sadness. "How has the faithful city become an harlot! She whom I filled with justice, so that righteousness har-

boured in her ! but now murderers !”* Again, “ For the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah the plants of his delights ; but when he looked for justice, behold oppression !—for righteousness, behold, woeful cries.”† Another lamenting watchman of Zion says in the name of God : “ Yet, I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly of seed of truth, how then art thou turned unto me into a degenerate plant of a strange vine ?”‡ “ How is the gold become dim ! how is the finest gold changed ! Shall sacred jewels be poured forth in the top of every street ?”§ But, abruptly as we are led in this chapter into the melancholy history of the backsliding and fall of the ancient Church, that awful event took place gradually, and the very steps of her descent we shall find carefully interwoven in this relation of the Bride.

“ I was sleeping,” says the Bride, “ but my heart was awake.” The substance of this figure is as rich and comprehensive in meaning as the phrase is sublime and beautiful. The heart is frequently spoken of in the Scriptures as the seat of affection, active thought, reflection, zeal, love, and sincere attachment. It is therefore easy to perceive that by the *heart being awake*, while the whole body is at rest, stretched in drowsiness and inactivity, the Bride describes a state of mind, a moral condition in which, alas, many a believer is actually even now-a-days, either with or without his knowledge. It is a state of deep moral sleep while awake at the same time—a moral somnambulism—a living death, a dead life ; a believing infidel, and an infidel believer, for such is knowledge without practice—a fruit tree without fruit, a well without water, a lamp without oil, a splendid time-piece without motion, the spring being broken. . . . Ask such sleeping believers about their confession of faith, and you will find them full as Jordan in the rainy season, but ask them to act according to their confession, and you find them dead, frozen, and motionless—ask them what Christ had done for them, and they will rehearse it unto you with powerful eloquence, and with a pathos to move you to tears ; but ask them what they do, or will do for Christ, and you will find them fast asleep, yea dead. They were once like good salt, but a cold rain has

* Is. i. 21. † Is. v. 7. ‡ Jer. ii. 21. § Lam. iv. 1.

wasted away their saltness, and they are now good for nothing. They retain a dry and barren confession, but there is no sap in them, no vigour for action. The "whole armour of God" hangs before their eyes, in the Holy Bible which they still read, in the sanctuary which they still frequent, but although they see at the same time the enemy pouring in on every side, they have no power to put it on, nor energy to fight; they sleep, they are morally dead.

Such was exactly the state of the Church at the period of which the Bride of the Song speaks in the beginning of this chapter. Her heart was yet full of emotion at the recollection of the glorious manifestations of her Bridegroom's love, of which she could yet think with great affection and delight; but for active religion, for living prayer, for spiritual adoration, for a vigorous testimony, for producing fruits of righteousness, for causing her light to shine before men, as a lamp put on an high place, she was utterly unfit, for a deep sleep had overtaken her. But at the same time the *waking heart within the sleeping body* may also signify, the temple of God with its priests and Levites still waking and active in the service of the sanctuary, the servants of God, the prophets, still widely awake and full of vigour in their sacred office, though in the midst of a frozen nation, and indifferent members of a backsliding Church. It is owing to the watchfulness of this *heart* that she perceived the voice of the Bridegroom when He spake, and heard Him when He knocked; for though she greatly aggravated her position by refusing to open unto Him instantly, so that He left her in displeasure, still this very misfortune had then the advantage of arousing her to a right sense of her misery and danger, and thus brought her to repentance; for when He knocked, had her *heart* been asleep like herself, had her watchman grown negligent and indifferent, entire and perpetual moral death would have been the awful consequence. Such being the most natural inference made from the primary and clear sense of the passage, we are the more inclined to adopt the view, that by the *waking heart*, the faithful priests and Levites, and especially the prophets are designated; for it was they who made known to the sleeping Bride, the voice, and the knocking, the invitations and the threatenings of her offended Lord. And this we shall see in a still clearer light.

While the Church had thus sunk into a deep sleep, her watchful, and continually throbbing heart, perceived at once the knocking of the Bridegroom at the door, and His voice addressing her, and praying her to open unto Him. *This watchful heart was the prophets.* In the year that King Uzziah died, the Church was fast asleep, and in such a deplorable state that one of her watchmen could say, "I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." But this holy watchman of Zion was awake, and saw the heavens open, and the great Jehovah on His awful throne surrounded by angel and seraph, and heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" to which the prophet answered, "here am I; send me."* Jeremiah, another waking heart of the sleeping Church, perceived likewise the Bridegroom's voice and knockings, when He said unto him, "I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations . . . for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak."† These, as well as many other instances of the same kind, put beyond doubt the spiritual signification of the metaphor in question. The ancient Church gradually growing cold and indifferent, after having reached her highest spiritual prosperity, practically excluded Christ, her beloved Bridegroom, from her abode, and locked herself up for worldly repose and carnal ease. The highly privileged daughter of Zion became drowsy, lazy, and fatigued with the solemn services of her God in His sanctuary, tired of closet devotion, wearied of the continual excitement of her soul, and resolved to retire for a while, as she thought, into the world's din, and repose herself in the ensnaring lap of perishing vanities, thinking that a little slumber outside of the Lord's sanctuary, a little Christless repose, a little distraction out of the bond of the covenant, would do her soul good instead of harm. "What evil, thought she, can befall me by a little relaxation? What harm can a moment's innocent repose do? Will not this, on the contrary, refresh me, and fit me better for the service of my Beloved? Let me therefore retire for repose, and at whatever moment my Beloved may come, I will arise in an instant and open to him; for though my body be heavy, and mine eyes full of sleep, my heart is awake and full of affec-

* Is. vi.

† Jer. i. 5—7.

tion." Her omniscient Bridegroom saw this her fatal resolution with grief and compassion, for He knew that her *first love* had gone, and that her fall was at hand, while Satan, the enemy of God and man, looked upon it with malicious triumph, knowing too that where Christ is *excluded*, he is *included*, and wherever there is spiritual sleep there is a ready prey prepared for him.

Thus, alas! has the daughter of Zion retired for sleep, and though she thought that she was yet full of the impressions made on her mind and soul by the late manifestations and tokens of divine love, and expressions of endearment of her beloved Lord, she does not neglect to shut Him out completely from her abode where she resolved to revel in the stream of absorbing and soul-killing pleasures. While she yet has no idea of loosing one moment in opening to her Beloved whenever he may come and knock, she fastens the door, not only with the lock used in the East by day, and which any person knowing the secret can open by putting his hand through the hole of the door, but even with iron bolts from within as used in the East by night.* Thus barred up and secured against any disturbance from without, she began to undress—to put off the robes of righteousness which her Beloved gave her at the renewal of the Covenant on the solemn day of the dedication of the temple. Having washed her feet, and anointed herself with precious ointments and myrrh (an image signifying the indulgence in the carnal lusts, and extravagant pleasures of this world), she lay down on the couch of ingratitude, faithlessness, indifference, and worldly-mindedness, utterly unconscious, like her mother Eve, after having eaten of the forbidden fruit, of having done any wrong; but, like her too, she was not to remain long undisturbed, unrebuked, or unpunished.

* Such is the contradictory conduct of every backslider at the beginning of his misery. He casts himself into the cold arms of the world, thinking that one hour's reading of the Bible would repair six days' revelling, but forgets that the world and revelling *exclude* the Bible, and will either prevent him from reading it, or make it of no effect unto him. He thinks that a week's distraction and extravagance might be healed by one Sabbath service, by one serious sermon of his pastor, but forgets that the world's distraction and carnal pleasures unfit the soul for Jehovah's sanctuary, and make ordinances of no avail unto him; yea, he forgets that the disease into which he plunges himself willingly, would soon produce in him a horror at the only medicine that can cure it.

“What meanest thou, O sleeper?” said once a trembling shipmaster to the fugitive and sleeping Jonah, “Arise! call upon thy God; may be that God will pity us that we perish not.” So the great Master of the universe came to His sleeping Bride, and in divine compassion said to her (by the medium of her *heart*, the holy prophets), “What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise! and open unto me, lest thou perish.” And O, what tenderness! what wonderful love! what celestial sweetness in His voice and address! “Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my accomplished one (or faithful one); for my head is filled with dew, my locks with the drops of the night.” Whence that drowsiness? whence that fatigue? It is surely not I nor my service that has caused it, for, “O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.”* “What more could have been done to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?”† “For thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the Rock of thy strength. . . . In the day that thou wast planted, thou didst grow vigorously, and early in the morning hast thou made thy seed to flourish, but the harvest is a lamentation in the day of possession, and a desperate grief.”‡ “Open unto me, my sister, my love.” Open unto me thy heart and soul, thy afflicted thoughts and troubled mind, thy bewildering doubts, and thy deep wounds. “Turn, turn ye unto me; for why shall ye die, O house of Israel.” “Open unto me, my sister”—my kinswoman whom I redeemed, my Bride whom I espoused unto me; for, “This people have I formed for myself, that they should shew forth my praise.”§ “Open unto me, my love.” “I have loved you, saith the Lord.”|| “Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn thee (after me) with loving kindness.”¶ “Open unto me, my sister, my love.” “Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not

* Mic. vi. 3.

† Is. v. 4.

‡ Is. xvii. 10, 11.

§ Is. xliii. 21.

|| Mal. i. 2.

¶ Jer. xxxi. 1—3.

sown. Israel is holiness unto the Lord,—the first fruits of his increase.*

“Open unto me, my sister, my love, my faithful one,” said the ever gracious God to His slumbering and ungrateful Church, as if nothing wrong had happened!—as if she had remained as faithful and full of grace, as she was in the day of her espousals! And why? 1st, Such were and always are the dealings of our Lord and Judge—Certain of His power, and knowing the feeble frame of transgressors, He meets them at the bar of divine patience, not crushing them nor overwhelming them with the terror of His awful Presence. Serene and calm, serious and holy, lovely and just, searching the delinquent, and convincing him that his crime and punishment have their motives, source and consequences, in his own heart, “Adam where art thou? who told thee that thou wast naked?” Cain, “where is Abel thy brother?” And in both cases, while divine justice was satisfied by deserved punishment inflicted, infinite goodness mingled with the sentence, mercy and compassion preceded and succeeded the chastisement of the criminals. 2d, Because of the saints that were still in the midst of that Church, as the prophet said in the name of God, “Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit; but Judah still ruleth (or wrestles) with God, and is faithful with the saints.”† 3d, Because it was conditional; if she opened unto Him, if she repented and turned; then her sins would have been blotted out like an emptied cloud, and her transgressions would have been remembered no more. “Open unto me,” said Emanuel to His backsliding Bride, “for my head is filled with dew, my locks with the drops of the night.” Though we might pass over this sublime image without ascribing to it any other signification than the poetical beauty and splendour which it casts upon the whole passage, still we think it has a signification, as the following quotation will show: “This people have I formed for myself, that they should shew forth my praise. But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; for thou hast become weary of me, O Israel. . . . I have not overworked thee with offerings, nor wearied thee

* Jer. ii. 2, 3.

† Hos. xi. 12.

with incense, . . . but thou hast made me to serve (or, hast overworked me) with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities. I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.”* Thus we may explain that beautiful metaphor. When the ancient Church was in full communion with her Lord and Saviour, who dwelt between the cherubim of her sanctuary, then it was called *day*, and a glorious and cloudless day it was; for the Sun of Righteousness shone upon the daughter of Zion and her splendid temple with all his dazzling splendour and brilliancy. But when that Church became cold, indifferent, drowsy, and at last fell asleep, then began a cold, dark, and dreary night, during which the Bridegroom, shut out as it were from His temple, went about the streets of Jerusalem in the midst of a tempestuous rain, and came to knock at the door of his sleeping and heartless Bride. All her sins and iniquities, committed during that night, were as so many cold drops, falling upon the innocent head of the “Man of sorrows,” who is “wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities.” It was in that state and in that dismal period that the divine Bridegroom is represented as knocking at the door of His sleeping Bride, and saying, “Open unto me, my sister, my love, my dove, my accomplished one (or faithful one), for my head is filled with dew, my locks with the drops of the night.”

As with the moral condition of poor humanity, it often fares in like manner with their physical condition. Let a fatigued and copiously perspiring man expose himself to a strong draught of air, though for the purpose of cooling and refreshing himself, yet at the certain risk of a severe cold, we would call his act imprudent. Let him add in explanation that he calculated on a day's rest being sufficient to cure him of the cold, and we will call him mad; for not only have such colds prostrated men and chained them to the bed of sickness during weeks, months, and years, but they have often dragged their thousands to the very grave. But men commit still greater errors, when from the hottest fight of their Christian pilgrimage towards Zion they turn aside, for a little while as they think, to cool and refresh themselves

* Is. xliii. 21—25.

among the chilling mountains of this deceitful world's vanities. And doubly foolish, nay fearful, is their mistake if they think that the moral cold, which they are sure to take will be cured by one day's repentance, and their loss of time made up by additional speed after their imaginary refreshment; for, instead of repenting, they will find themselves hardened, and instead of additional speed they will find a complete stop put to their journey, nay they will find themselves dragged backwards at every effort they make to advance forward. Such was the dismal experience of the ancient Church at large. When she had reached a great height of spiritual prosperity, and was marching vigorously from strength to strength towards Zion above, all of a sudden she felt herself tired of her glorious journey. Instead of seeking refreshment and new vigour in Jehovah's sanctuary, she turned aside into the inviting hills of worldly lusts, pride, and pleasure, in order to cool and refresh herself, to get a little repose, a little sleep, a little slumber, flattering herself all the time that this little distraction, as she might have called it, could never estrange her from her Beloved, nor so harden her as that she would not instantly open should He come and knock. Vain imagination, erroneous calculation! Laziness brought on drowsiness, and drowsiness slumber, pretended weariness invited sleep, and sleep caused forgetfulness, indifference, and the grossest ingratitude. While thus sunk in unconscious and deep sleep, the Bridegroom comes at an unexpected hour of the night, the night, of her moral darkness. He gently knocks at the door of her conscience, her heart, and soul; He wishes to enter as formerly, but the gracious Bridegroom finds himself excluded; the *world* is within and has barred the door against Him; He knocks again, but receives no answer. He then joins His voice to His knocking—and O what a sweet, what a lovely and graceful voice! "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my faithful one; for my head is filled with dew—my locks with the drops of night." Deep as her sleep was she heard that sweet voice (her waking heart, the prophets, made her hear it in spite of her), which in former days she listened to with so much delight, and at which she would have leaped over mountains and rivers to cast herself into the arms of her Beloved. Ah, but by that time she was cold, her first love was gone, the world had grasped

her heart, and captivated her affection. She hesitates awhile, and then gives utterance to the annoyance she felt at being thus disturbed in the midst of her sweet repose: "I have put off my robe—how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet—how shall I defile them?"—a clear though indirect declaration, that she did not think it worth the trouble to derange herself for the sake of Him.

Dear reader, if your soul revolts, if you are filled with indignation at this shocking instance of ingratitude on the part of the ancient Church, remember that she has not remained singular in her folly and crime; for how would the fatigued ball-dancing and wearied theatre-going so-called Christians of our days behave, were one to call them out of their box in the middle of a fascinating act, or away from a ball in the middle of an exciting dance, or awaken them out of the sleep into which their wearied bodies had fallen prayerlessly at the last watch of the night, for the cause of Him, who left heaven's glory to bleed on the cross for them? How many Christians, alas, put themselves, with open eyes, in a position which unfits them for days and weeks to meet their God! How many plunge themselves into a condition during which, if Jesus would come and say, "Open unto me, my love," &c., they would surely answer like His ancient Bride, "I have put off my robe—how shall I put it on?"

To spare the alleged trouble to His forgetful and ungrateful Bride, the compassionate Bridegroom makes the last attempt. He put forth His hand through the hole of the door, or rather of the door post, to try if He could open the lock within.* But in vain, iron bolts have been applied and bars have so fastened the door from within, that even with the key in His hand and with all His knowledge of the lock, He could not open it from without; He then saw that He was not shut out by accident, but intentionally and de-

* To this day the oriental houses have such a hole in the door-post, by which the master and domestics open the locks by putting in their hands, while strangers neither dare nor know how to do so; for the locks are variously made. At night, when the household retires for rest, additional bolts and bars so fasten the door that there is no possibility of opening it from without; but this is the work of the master of the house, or the chief domestic of confidence, and of course is not done so long as the master is without, but only when he has retired for the night's rest.

liberately debarred from the abode and mind of His Bride, who, aware that He never enters by any side way, nor by violence against the door, had so fastened it that He should not be able to enter. The spiritual meaning of this figure is so clear and plain to Scripture readers that it needs no explanation; but a few passages will cast still more light upon it. "I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that is not good, after their own thoughts."* "Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see."† "Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? when I called was there none to answer? Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver?"‡

But sleepy, drowsy, cold, indifferent and ungrateful as the Bride was at that time, she was not yet so hardened nor so completely blinded as to be unmoved by her Bridegroom's last fruitless attempt, and to be indifferent to the consequences. "My Beloved put in His hand by the hole (of the door post), and my bowels were moved for Him." Miserable compassion! though better than none at all; tardy resolution, though better than an obstinate refusal. The offended Bridegroom, who is at the same time the omniscient, righteous, and holy God, knew her heart and thoughts better than she herself could know them. He at once saw both her malady and its remedy; her case was judged and her doom sealed. Her own narrative, though very short, yet distinctly shows that her first love was lost, her zeal withered, and her spiritual life gone. She became too rich for Him who was to become poor for her sake, too worldly and corrupt for Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,—too lazy, negligent, and indifferent for Him who is both mighty and prompt to save, and who is a near refuge in time of trouble; nay, she became utterly unfit for constant communion with her Lord and Saviour, for the uninterrupted spiritual life and fellowship of the saints. True, she rose at last to open to her Beloved, but not until He had left her in displeasure. And O in what a lamentable state of mind did she open to Him, even according to her own account! Sleepy, disconcerted, displeased, and murmuring at the trouble, she rises slowly, and with lingering steps

* Is. lxx. 2.

† Is. xxvi. 11.

‡ Is. 1. 2.

moves on, not towards the door, but towards the toilet-table, and makes preparations as if for a dancing ball—of course not forgetting her ointments and perfumes, and other adornments. What a strange metamorphosis for the late Egyptian slave to play the delicate princess towards Him who delivered and exalted her! And all the time He stands without in a rainy and dreary night! O poor Christians, growing rich by His blessing, beware of pride and folly, into which snares so many fall; take the ancient Church for an example, and tremble. “I arose to open to my Beloved;”—and did she run immediately towards the door? Not at all. “But my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with fragrant myrrh, passing upon the handles of the lock.” Oh what foolish luxury she wanted to mix with the service of the great and holy God! What perishing vanities and worldly drudgery she joined with the worship of Him who is a Spirit, and demands to be worshipped in spirit and in truth! It is no matter of surprise that for such a degenerate lady, the service of God is burdensome, especially when it interferes with her indolent habits, with her luxuriant exercises, with the repose she needs after a wearisome and long dance round the all-absorbing idols of this world. She is unfit for God’s sanctuary, though she may yet from time to time open her eyes and tremble at the thought of God, death, judgment, eternity, heaven, or hell. But even when such persons are moved from time to time to some acts of piety, to devotional exercises, &c., their service is so lukewarm that the Lord spits it out of His mouth; even their praise and prayer is such that it is styled by Him an insupportable burden; as was the case with that fallen and degenerated Church. (See Is. i. 11—15.) Thus we see that the spirit in which that fallen Church prepared to open to her Lord, was that of an overgrown, rich, and neglectful physician, when awakened in the midnight hour to go and see a rich patient who has been suddenly taken ill. After repeated knocks at his door, repeated entreaties and invitations, he remembers that the sufferer employed him at a time when he was in circumstances of great need himself, and, therefore, he resolves at last to rise and visit him. But his preparations, dressings, lustrations, yawns, and sighs, &c., consume so much time that his poor patient is in great danger of being carried off from among the living. Such

was the conduct of the ancient backsliding Church towards her divine Master, "And when the Lord saw it He was wroth, because of the provokings of his sons and daughters. And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end will be."* O fearful judgment for poor weak mortals!

To the great astonishment and disappointment of the vain, corrupted, and self-deceived Bride, who in the pride of her heart foolishly and presumptuously imagined that the Lord would put up with all her delays, follies, and vanities, and wait her convenience, she found, on opening the door, that the Lord had left her in displeasure, and that He was gone! And many indolent and delaying sinners and backsliders have found since, still find, and will always find what that solemn warning means, "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near,"† for many who refuse it "to-day," may find all lost to morrow, even if they seek with tears, as Esau did his birthright, even the very things offered unto them "to-day" without money and without price. "I opened to my Beloved, but my Beloved had departed and was gone,"—awful punishment! fearful judgment! and why so severe? The Judge of the whole earth Himself gives the reason: "I have forsaken mine house, I have abandoned mine heritage, I have delivered the dearly beloved of my soul into the hands of her enemies. Mine heritage became unto me (or towards me) as a lion in the forest; she yelleth against me with her voice, therefore have I hated her."‡ The foolish, ungrateful, and arrogant Bride dared to open her mouth against Him to whom she owed not only her glory and honour, but her very existence—she yelled against Him with her irritated voice, saying, "I have put off my robe, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?" Ah, but her just rebuke was prepared many centuries beforehand, when Moses, her kind shepherd, foresaw her fall and exclaimed, "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish and unwise people? Is not he thy father that has bought thee? Hath he not made and established thee?"§

"I opened to my Beloved, but my Beloved had departed and was gone; my soul failed when He yet spake." Ah

* Deut. xxxii. 19, 20. † Is. lv. 6. ‡ Jer. xii. 7, 8. § Deut. xxxii. 6.

then He must have said something to her before He departed, and something very severe, so as to cause her to faint! Yea, before He left her He spoke to her by His servants the prophets, saying, "Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded. . . . I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh. . . . Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me."* Again, "Therefore will I appoint you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter, because, when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake ye did not hear; but ye did evil before mine eyes, and did choose that wherein I delight not."† "And now because ye have done all these works, saith the Lord, and I spake to you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not; therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and unto your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh."‡ Finally, the Lord told her by His prophet, saying, "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early."§ That Church had grievously sinned against infinite love, and great was to be her punishment. When her judgment was announced to her by God's servants the prophets, she partly disbelieved it, and at some times was terrified, and awoke to a sense of her danger, and began to seek the Lord, as in the days of Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah, but she found Him not. Her doom was sealed; and she was to undergo a severe pruning operation, she was to be purified of her pride and arrogance in the hot furnace of affliction, ere she could be restored to the favour of her provoked God. Hence we hear her say, "I sought Him, but I could not find Him, I called Him, but He gave me no answer." This deplorable condition of the ancient Church is most pathetically and completely depicted in the following passage, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and

* Prov. i. 24—28.

† Is. lxxv. 12.

‡ Jer. vii. 13, 14.

§ Hos. v. 15.

your God, and your sins have made him hide his face from you that he will not hear. . . . The way of peace they know not, and there is no judgment in their path. . . . Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity: for brightness, but we walk in darkness. We grope for the wall like the blind . . . we stumble at noonday as in the night; we are in desolate places like the dead. We roar like bears, and mourn sore like doves: we look for judgment, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far off from us."*

While the forsaken and desolate Bride went about in this manner, or rather, as the prophet says, "groped in the dark," as a blind man, in search of her provoked and departed Lord, the "watchmen of the city," the "keepers of the walls" found her, who, instead of meeting her as those in the days of the prophet Samuel, mentioned in chap. iii. of this Song, smote and wounded her and took off the veil from her head; "The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took off my veil from me." It has already been remarked at the beginning of the third chapter, that these "Watchmen, and keepers of the walls," were the prophets of God, of whom He said, "Upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, have I set watchmen, who shall never hold their peace day nor night; ye that make mention of the Lord (or as margin, "ye that are the Lord's remembrancers"), keep not silence; and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."† But they were set there not only for the purpose of reminding the Lord, by prayer and supplication, of His gracious promises regarding Zion and her daughter, the Church, but also to remind the latter of her duties, to rebuke, warn, and threaten her because of her sins, and to announce to her the coming punishments: "I have also set watchmen over you, saying, Harken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken."‡ "Son of man, I have set thee as a watchman over the house of Israel," said the Lord to the prophet Ezekiel. The watchmen being then the prophets, we must now show how they wounded the fallen and desolate Bride, even at the period when she pre-

* Is. lix. 1, 2, 8-11. † Is. lxii. 6, 7. ‡ Jer. vi. 17.

tended to seek eagerly her departed Lord; and how they unmasked her, by tearing the veil from her and thus making her appear in all her nakedness, sinfulness, and corruption.

One of these watchmen said unto her, "Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom . . . ye people of Gomorrah; to what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord. . . . Bring no more vain oblations: incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. . . . And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, even when ye multiply prayers, I will not hear; for your hands are full of blood. . . . How is the faithful city become an harlot! I filled her with justice, righteousness dwelt in her, but now murderers. . . . Thy princes are rebels, and companions of thieves: every one of them loveth bribes, and followeth after rewards; they judge not the fatherless; neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them. Therefore saith the Lord, the Lord of Hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies."* "Enter into the rock, and hide thyself in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His Majesty."† Such awful rebukes administered by that holy and severe watchman to the backsliding Bride, even at a period when she was eagerly seeking the Lord, though not in the right way, as we see from the multitude of the sacrifices by which she tried to reconcile her offended Lord, we meet with everywhere in his prophecies. Because their number is so great, and since the readers of the Bible are so well acquainted with them, we pass on to make a few appropriate quotations from other watchmen. "Surely, as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the Lord. . . . Let us lie down in our shame, and let our confusion cover us; for we have sinned against the Lord our God."‡ "I have likened the daughter of Zion to an house-keeping and delicate woman" (or "to a woman shut up in her house, because she is spoiled by tenderness.") Is not this an allusion to her refusing to open unto the Lord when He knocked? "Shepherds and their

* Is. i. † Is. ii 10. ‡ Jer. iii. 20—25.

flocks, (viz., generals and their armies) shall come unto her : they shall pitch their tents against her round about. . . . Prepare ye war against her. . . . Arise and let us go by night, and destroy her palaces. . . . Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee ; lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited. . . . To what purpose cometh there to me incense from Sheba, and the sweet cane from a far country ? Your burnt-offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto me. . . . O daughter of my people, gird thee with sackcloth and wallow thyself in ashes ; make thee mournings as for an only son, most bitter lamentations ; for the spoiler shall suddenly come upon us."* "Cut off thy crown (O Jerusalem) and cast it away, and lift a loud lamentation in high places ; for the Lord hath rejected and abandoned this generation of his wrath."† "Say unto the king and to the queen, Humble yourselves, and sit low ; for the crown of your glory hath descended from your heads. The cities of the south shall be shut up, and there shall be none to open them : the whole of Judea shall be carried away captive—a complete captivity."‡ We could quote innumerable such like passages from the same and from other prophets, but we think that the above are quite sufficient to show what the Bride of our Song meant in saying that the watchmen wounded her, and carried off her veil (her crown, her pride, and her glory) from her head, while she went about seeking her departed Beloved in the darkness of night.

The poor, desolate, and wailing daughter of Zion, seeing that she can expect nothing else from the inexorable watchmen but wounds, rebukes, threatenings, announcements of captivity, slaughter, dispersion, humiliation, and calamity, turns at last towards her rivals—towards the "daughters of Jerusalem" (the Gentile nations) of whom she was formerly so jealous that she conjured them twice not to disturb her love. Fearing that, after all that had happened to her—that after the unanimous and repeated declarations of the watchmen, that her Lord had rejected and abandoned her for an indefinite period, until she should repent in dust and ashes, and until the measure of her punishment should be full—her beloved was likely to reveal Himself and show His

* Jer. vi. 2—5, xx. 26.

† Jer. vii. 29.

‡ Jer. xiii. 18, 19.

favour to the Gentile nations, or to some of them, she therefore conjures them again, that should they happen to meet her Beloved, to be sure and tell Him that she languishes with love—that she was ill, wounded, broken-hearted, humiliated, and in danger of fainting away altogether should He remain away any longer, and continue to hide His face from her in hot displeasure.

Before concluding the comment or explanation of the first seven verses, we have still before us a small task to perform. The passages above quoted have served us only to illustrate the general scope of the Bride's narrative, of her backsliding, of her falling asleep, of her behaviour at the Lord's visitation, of His departure, of her seeking Him, and of the treatment she met with from the watchmen of Zion. But as her fall was by degrees, as well as the knockings of her gracious Bridegroom, and her lingerings and refusals to open to Him were often repeated, before He finally departed from her, it will surely not be amiss to trace these facts in sacred history. And not only shall we find these distinctly related, but those also about her going about during the night season seeking her Beloved, and repeatedly addressing herself to the watchmen, and always meeting with the same results. For this purpose we shall shortly glance over her history from the beginning of her fall, after the death of Solomon, down to the captivity, to which period, as we already saw, the first seven verses bring us down. As early as the days of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, the Church became drowsy and went to sleep: "And it came to pass, when Rehoboam had the kingdom, and had strengthened himself, he forsook the law of the Lord, and all Israel with him."* But the sleeping Bride soon heard the voice of her Beloved knocking at the door. Sheshak, King of Egypt, came with a mighty army, invaded Judea, and pushed his ravaging conquests to the very walls of Jerusalem. "Then came Shemaiah the prophet to Rehoboam, and to the princes of Judah that were gathered together to Jerusalem, because of Sheshak, and said unto them, Thus saith the Lord, ye have forsaken me, and therefore have I also abandoned you into the hands of Sheshak. Whereupon the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves, and

* 2 Chron. xii. 1.

they said, The Lord is righteous. And when the Lord saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the Lord came unto Shemaiah, saying, They have humbled themselves, therefore will I not destroy them, but will grant them now a little deliverance, and my wrath shall not be poured out (or completed) upon Jerusalem by the hand of Sheshak. Nevertheless, they shall become his servants, that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries."* Here we have the first instance of the Bride's having fallen asleep, and of the Bridegroom's inviting her to open unto Him (repent), and knocking at her door.

But the daughter of Zion soon fell back into her drowsiness and sleep, and was again awakened by the pious king Asa, who spoke unto her in the name of the Bridegroom, and by the formidable invasion of the mighty army of Zerah the Ethiopian ("behold He knocketh.") After the great victory granted by the Lord unto Asa and his people over their enemies, "The Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded, and he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; the Lord is with you while ye be with Him: and if ye seek Him He will be found of you, but if you forsake Him He will forsake you." ("The voice of my Beloved. . . . Open unto me," &c.) "Now there are many days for Israel (in which they will be) without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without the law. But in his trouble he will return unto the Lord God of Israel; they shall seek Him, and He shall be found of them," &c.† This is the correct translation of that passage, which referred to future days, and not to past, as it has been erroneously rendered. The language of that prophecy is altogether incompatible with any idea of the past; especially when we compare its יָמִים רַבִּים (yamim rabim, "many days") of verse 3, with Hosea iii. 4, 5, and his "yamim rabim," we see clearly that it is the same oracle in the same sense, though with the difference that Azariah's prophecy referred to Israel's fall immediately after and down to the Babylonish captivity, while Hosea's was renewed and intended to show forth Israel's second dispersion and long destitution during the gospel dispensation. But while a gloomy future was thus

* 2 Chron. xii. 5-8.

† 2 Chron. xv. 1--3.

foretold to the Bride, she was at the same time invited and encouraged to repentance and humiliation, by which a respite was promised to her. She partially awoke in the days of Asa and Jehoshaphat, and had a breathing time of prosperity before the coming storm. She gained a great victory over a mighty army of many confederate nations, during the reign of the latter king, though neither by her bow nor by her sword. With regard to her moral condition during that reign we read, "And he (Jehoshaphat) walked in the way of Asa his father, and departed not from it, doing that which is right in the sight of the Lord. Howbeit, the high places were not taken away, for as yet the people had not prepared their hearts unto the God of their fathers."* This is surely a loudly speaking passage, showing that even after being awakened, by the knocking of the Lord's judgments, by His invitations, threatenings, and counsel ("open unto me"), she was still half asleep. At first she refused to rise, and when, after repeated knockings and callings, she did rise, it was so slowly and lazily, and in such a murmuring tone, and with such unwillingness, that the Lord did not wait till she opened the door, but had departed while she was making her preparations.

Such a lukewarm state, such partial movements towards the door continued for a long period, and were intermingled with much sleep and slumber, much ingratitude, iniquity, and idolatry. Until the reign of king Josiah, when, after many knockings and callings, yea and warnings, wounds, and awful calamities, the Bride resolved at last to open to her Beloved, then the most complete reformation took place; no high places, no idols, no abominations were left—all were destroyed and swept away, and the daughter of Zion cordially opened to her Beloved. She opened, but He had departed and was gone, she called Him, but He answered not. An open roll of the long neglected law was found in the temple of God which He had abandoned. The book was read before the king, its awful curses and threatenings announced beforehand to the backsliding Bride so terrified him and his princes that he rent his garments, and sent his servants saying, "Go and inquire of the Lord for me, and for them that are

* 2 Chron. xx. 32, 33.

left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found; for great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord, to do according to all that is written in that book.”* The awakened and terrified Bride is represented here as going forth in search of her departed Lord; and in her desolate wanderings through the streets of Jerusalem, looking right and left for some one of the “watchmen,” the prophets, to ask information. She soon meets one, the prophetess Huldah, of whom she inquires about her Beloved. But fearful were the wounds which this watchman inflicted on the trembling Church. “Thus saith the Lord, behold I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah: because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto strange gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be poured out upon this place, and shall not be quenched.”†

Such answers, such deep wounds and severe bruises she constantly received from all the watchmen of Zion whom she met during the dreary night of her search and captivity, —from Jeremiah at Jerusalem, from Ezekiel at Babylon, and from all the other prophets, as we have seen already from the passages largely quoted above. When the Bride thus saw that her doom was unalterably determined, and that nothing remained for her but to drink to the very dregs the cup of bitterness prepared for her by an highly provoked God, she betook herself to the study of those oracles which directly refer to her punishments, to her captivity, and also to her restoration. From these she saw that, according to Jeremiah, her captivity and sufferings were to be at an end, at the expiration of seventy years. From Isaiah she saw that it was a “daughter of Jerusalem,” a Gentile monarch, that was destined to send back Zion’s captives, and to build the temple of the Lord.‡ From other prophecies she saw that the time for gathering (or at least “for calling in the Gentiles”) must be at hand. But what she must have

* 2 Chron. xxxiv. 21.

† 2 Chron. xxxiv. 24, 25.

‡ Is. xliv. 28, xlv. 1—7, &c.

dreaded above all is the prophecy of Moses, Deut. xxxii. 21, "They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation."* Hence we can easily understand her meaning in addressing herself in her distress to the daughters of Jerusalem, and in conjuring them once more, that should they happen to meet her Beloved before her, they should inform Him of her repentance and grief, of her wounds and tears, of her calamities and resignation. At the same time this figure shows the behaviour of the captive Church in the land of her captors. Having abandoned all her former idols, images, and high places, and strange gods, she attached herself sincerely to her Beloved (though absent at the time), spoke openly and publicly of Him before her oppressors, as the God of gods and Lord of lords; confessed that He was just and righteous in all the calamities He poured upon her guilty head; and that, notwithstanding these, she would continue to confess and serve Him, and Him alone, to seek Him diligently with tears of repentance, and not rest until she found Him. Moreover, she besought, yea conjured her captors, to be converted, to seek and find Him before her, to entreat Him by prayer and supplication to visit again His vine, and to return once more to His desolate and captive Bride, the daughter of Zion.

THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM.

8. What is thy Beloved more than *another* beloved,
O thou fairest among women?
What is thy Beloved more than *another* beloved,
That thou dost so conjure us?

THE CHURCH.

9. My Beloved is white and ruddy,
Distinguished among ten thousand.
10. His head is as the finest gold;
His locks are curled, and black as a raven.

* Deut. xxxii. 21.

11. His eyes—like doves at the rivers of water—
Are washed in milk ;
They sit in fulness (*i.e.*, as a diamond in the socket).
12. His cheeks are like beds of spices—
The towers of perfumed flowers ;
His lips are like lilies,
Dropping liquid myrrh.
13. His hands are like rollers of gold,
Beset (or filled) with the beryl ;
His body polished ivory,
Inlaid with sapphires.
14. His legs like marble pillars,
Founded on bases of gold.
15. His countenance is like Lebanon,
Excellent like the cedars.
16. His mouth is full of sweetness,
Yea, He is altogether lovely.
Such is my Beloved, and such my Friend,
O ye daughters of Jerusalem.

The first point which now demands explanation and illustration from sacred history is the existence, nature, and spiritual signification of the colloquy between the captive daughter of Zion and the daughters of Jerusalem, as it was figuratively foretold in this chapter. It has been already shown that the first seven verses of this chapter bring us down to the Babylonish captivity,—that it was at Babylon that the wounded, unveiled, and humiliated Bride, while emptying with one hand the cup of fury and bitterness from the hand of her justly provoked God, grasped with the other the consoling oracles which foretold her deliverance and restoration,—that one of these oracles clearly showed her, that certain daughters of Jerusalem (in the form of Persian kings) would be made the instruments in the hands of God, of sending her back from captivity to her own land, and of rebuilding her temple on Mount Zion,—a wonderful, though at that time mysterious, indication, that that temple would see the calling of the Gentiles, and terminate with it.*

* Some critics, who seem, alas ! to like confusion better than order (perhaps because the first is their element, while the second leaves them no place for sport), refuse to understand, that though the walls of Solomon's temple had been remodelled or rebuilt scores of times, it

The first of these monarchs was indicated by name by the prophet Isaiah. This was Cyrus, of whom the Lord spoke a long time before he was born, saying, "He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my desire (*i.e.*, regarding the restoration of the captives, building of the temple, &c.): even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built, and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid. . . . For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have called thee by thy name; I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me. . . . That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me; I am the Lord, and there is none else. . . . I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will make straight all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall send free my captives, not for price, nor for reward, said the Lord of Hosts."* In the same chapter, the daughters of Jerusalem, or the Gentile nations, are invited to come unto the Lord: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself; the word hath gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return. That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear."† Here we see once more how prophecies like these in the hands of the captive Church justify the figure adopted by Solomon in this chapter in making the hitherto jealous, but now exceedingly humbled and broken-hearted Bride, charge or conjure her former rivals, that should they find the Lord before her, and enter into His divine favour, to tell Him of the languishing of her soul after Him, and of her repentance and broken-

would still have been called "the first temple;" and that, though Herod remodelled and changed the lime and stone of the house built by Zerubbabel, still, as the regular service was not interrupted by the Church being carried off from it, nor otherwise, it cannot be called by any other name but "The second temple;" for it is not the cement, nor the wall, that bears that name, but the organization and establishment of the divine worship, and daily sacrifices on the altar according to the law of Moses, and the Church in connection with it. And this establishment took place only *twice*,—first, under Solomon's, and second, under Zerubbabel's administrations. Hence the prophet said, "The glory of this last house shall be greater than that of the first," for there were *only two* permanent establishments of Mosaic worship interrupted by the captivity, by the *removal of the Church*, while the change of the stone walls made and can make no difference. Indeed, one must be willingly blind not to see a thing so clear as this.

* Is. xliv. 28—xlv. 4—6, 13.

† Is. xlv. 22, 23.

heartedness, and thus move Him to pity and compassion towards her.

But these daughters of Jerusalem were then idolaters, worshippers of Bel of Babylon, and of many other idols which many had adopted at that period from the Sabian abominations, as they also worshipped fire, the old delusion of the Magi. Hence it was that when the captive Church at Babylon—crushed and wounded as she was by all the calamities that had come upon her—lamented none of her temporal losses and sufferings, so much as the loss of her Beloved (indeed, the origin and cause of all her losses), the astonished Gentile nations in all the places of her captivity asked her eagerly, “What is thy Beloved more than another beloved?” *i.e.*, “What preference doest thou claim for thy God and thy religion above ours? Why art thou so disconsolate; not about the loss of thy country and possessions—a loss which thou mightest easily make up in our rich and beautiful country—but about the loss of thy God? Why not adopt our religion and our gods, and become amalgamated with us and enjoy all our privileges, and partake of our happiness, riches, and power?” But the daughter of Zion was at that time completely purified from all superstition, and made entirely free from the snares of idolatry in the furnace of affliction, and full of a vehement and fervent desire to return to her Lord, and enjoy once more His divine favour; as is beautifully described by the prophet: “A voice was heard upon the high places (or rather ‘in the corners,’ *i.e.*, in all the places of Israel’s dispersion), weeping and supplications of the children of Israel: for they have perverted their way, and have forgotten the Lord their God. Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God. Surely in vain have we *expected salvation* from the hills, from the multitudes of mountains (from the *high places* and their altars with which the mountains of Judea were once filled); truly, in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel.”* It was in that happy state of mind that the ignorant daughters of Jerusalem asked her, “What is thy Beloved more than another beloved?” It was in that period of awakened and fervent

* Jer. iii. 21—24.

love and ardent zeal for her Beloved, that the captive daughter of Zion opened her mouth and declared unto her benighted conquerors who her Beloved was, laying before them some of His glorious attributes, His purity and holiness, His unity and omnipotence, His wisdom, justice, love, truth, and compassion—that He was the only supreme God, easily distinguished among the ten thousand false gods of the heathen in that He was the Creator and sole governor of the whole universe, and thus the God of gods, and Lord of lords. Along with that statement she declared to them, that so far from adopting any of the heathen gods in His stead, or along with Him, she would lie in the dust of confusion and humiliation until He in His divine compassion would remember her, return unto her, pardon her past sins and transgressions, and adopt her again as His own espoused and beloved Bride.

Should any one ask, When did the captive Church make such a noble public confession at Babylon? we answer, Let him carefully examine the sacred history of that period, beginning with the captive Levites at “Babel streams,” and examining the lives, actions, and testimonies of such persons as Ezekiel, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, the noble Nehemiah and Ezra the holy scribe, Joshua the first high-priest, and Zerubbabel the governor, and Mordecai, and the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, and many other illustrious names mentioned in the Holy Scriptures; (and how many hundreds more of such eminent children of God must there have been whose names are not particularly mentioned!) Then let him remember the heroic actions and glorious public confessions of some of them which elicited such wonderful exclamations, favourable edicts, and strong testimonies from the Babylonian, Persian, and Median monarchs, and he will have no difficulty in seeing it. After the strong and clear confession of the only true omnipotent and omniscient God, whom Daniel so prudently and wonderfully disclosed in his interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s first dream, the latter exclaimed, “Of a truth it is that your God (mark the God of his captives!) is the God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret.”* And what, we ask, do the figures in

* Dan. ii. 47.

this chapter contain, that is not perfectly explained, by the history of the saints in the fiery furnace? Here we have before us a monster-image of gold erected by the great conqueror Nebuchadnezzar, at whose name all the inhabitants of the earth trembled. This idol was to be worshipped as a god by all the different nations and tribes of his great empire when coming to his capital or dwelling there; and indeed, "When all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, . . . and other kinds of music, all the peoples, nations, and languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up."* But the captive Bride of God neither fell down nor worshipped that dumb idol, but rather bowed in secret before her invisible Lord in prayer and supplication, and worshipped her absent Beloved and Him alone. Seeing that daring courage, surely the benighted daughters of Jerusalem must have continually said unto her, "What is thy Beloved more than another beloved?" Why dost not thou worship the golden god of the mighty conqueror our king, in obedience to whose command we all abandoned our own gods, and worship his? Her answer no doubt was a vigorous confession of faith, a description of the attributes of the supreme God, her Lord, Creator, and Master, and a declaration of His commandment to her not to have any other god besides Him, nor to bow before any image made by man. The astonished idolators reported this answer to their proud monarch, who was filled with indignation, and having summoned the three servants of the living God before him, said unto them: "Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? Now, if ye be ready, that at what time ye hear the cornet . . . ye fall down and worship the image which I have made, *well*; but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace, and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" Is not this again the very same question figuratively put forth in our chapter, "What is thy Beloved more than another beloved?" But the Bride answered: "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if

* Dan. iii. 7.

not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."* And what followed? The now devoted and faithful Bride, faithful even unto death, was laid hold of and bound, and cast into the midst of the devouring flames. But her Beloved sent His angel into the midst of the flames to deliver her. When the proud tyrant saw it he exclaimed: "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the Most High God, come forth, and come hither." When they came before him he said again: "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and has changed the king's word (*i.e.* resisted his order), and yielded their bodies that they might not serve nor worship any other god, but their God. Therefore a decree is made by me, that every people, nation, and language, which speak anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill, because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort."† Many other events, many other confessions of the ancient Church at Babylon might be cited to manifest the influence they had upon the daughters of Jerusalem in exhibiting the vast difference between the living and almighty God, her absent Bridegroom, and their dumb idols which they worshipped as Gods and protectors; and also to shew the testimony which these ignorant idolators rendered unto the God of Zion after having become acquainted with some of His glorious attributes by the testimonies, confessions, and behaviour of His captive children. But as the reader knows all these from sacred history, and as we shall yet have to recur to some of them in the course of our exposition of the next chapter, we think that those referred to will answer the purpose of refreshing his memory and showing how such events explain the figures employed in this portion of our Song, of showing why the captive Bride is thus represented as if asked by the Gentile nations in the places of her dispersion, why she thus lamented the absence of her Beloved? and why she would not adopt another religion and worship another god? To these inquiries she answered, first by describing the glory and

* Dan. iii. 14—17

† Dan. iii. 28, 29.

majesty, the omnipotence, justice, love, and loveliness of the only living God, to whom she was espoused by an everlasting Covenant, and whom she was determined to seek even unto death. And then she only added: "Such is my Beloved, and such my Friend, O ye daughters of Jerusalem." This was quite sufficient to make all the dumb idols of their own invention and manufacture fall to the ground and lick the dust without one additional word about their emptiness, and helplessness, or about the vanity and stupidity of those that worship them (which might have irritated instead of awakening them.) Indeed, this calm, dignified, and clear confession of the Bride was sufficient to make the astonished Gentiles not only confess and openly acknowledge (by royal proclamations and otherwise) the superiority, the greatness, and the supremacy of the God of heaven, but even to awaken in them an ardent desire to join the daughter of Zion in her search for her Beloved, as we shall see in the next chapter.

With regard to the figurative language which Solomon has put into the mouth of the Bride, when he makes her describe the power, majesty, glory, and loveliness of her Beloved, we must remember, in the first place, that we have before us a portion of the Bible which is composed in the highest poetical style, and clothed in the most mystical metaphors. In the second place, we must observe that while almost all the figurative names, titles, and comparisons applied by the Bridegroom to His Bride the Church, can, nay must, be explained as to their spiritual significations, those applied by the Bride to describe in human language and metaphor the glory and majesty of the infinite and invisible God, cannot be fully explained—that while the Church of God was composed then as now of believers, or converted sinners, mortal and finite beings the same as we are, possessing the same qualities, fulfilling the same duties, and serving the same purposes, and undergoing exactly the same changes as we the present members of the present Church of God do, we can easily explain the figures by which these things are presented; but a stop is put to our speculative imaginations when we attempt to explain the figures and metaphors applied to the invisible God, whom none can find out unto perfection. For instance: when He compares His Bride to a lily among thorns, to a dove in the

clefts of a rock, to an inclosed garden, to precious plants and their fruits, to a sealed fountain; or when He describes her spiritual qualities under images and figures of female beauty, we can and must explain them by spiritual subjects of our own experience, and within our reach, and with the aid of other passages of Scripture, where the faith and hope, the sufferings and trials, the graces and gifts, the prosperity and glory of the saints and members of the Church are exhibited by the same figures, images, and similitudes as those of the Song. But with regard to such figures and images as are employed in this chapter to describe the indescribable, to paint the inconceivable, to grasp at the infinite, to express in human terms, and by subjects borrowed from material nature, the power, purity, holiness, majesty, justice, love, and splendour of the blessed Covenant-Angel Jehovah Zidkenu, who is the express image of Him before whose throne the adoring Seraph veils his face, what can we do in the way of explanation? It was the privilege of inspired men of God to depict the celestial by the terrestrial imagery, to describe the awfully mysterious majesty of heaven and the divine glory, which in a trance they were allowed to glance at, in such words of human language, and by such images of nature as our imagination can reach, and by which we form our ideas of things of the highest value and perfection, loveliness and attractiveness. All that we can add to these in the way of explanation would only contribute to heighten the wall already insurmountable to finite mortals, to make the mysterious more obscure, the inconceivable still more bewildering. While, therefore, we admire the beauty and richness of these figures, we say with regard to the unutterable substance which they hide, "It is higher than heaven, what can we know? it is deeper than hell, what can we do?" Who will deny the sublimity of the figurative language employed by the inspired Psalmist, when describing Jehovah as fighting his battles? "In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: He heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears. Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations of the hills also moved and were shaken, because he was wroth. There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured; coals were kindled by it. He also bowed the heavens, and came down: and darkness

was under his feet. And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly, yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind. . . . The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice, hailstones and coals of fire. Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot forth lightnings and discomfitted them."* Now, let him who can spiritualize the sublime figures by which David describes Jehovah's awful majesty and omnipotence in war, try also to explain spiritually the magnificent figures by which Solomon describes Jehovah's serene majesty in time of peace. But we shall by no means give way to mere fancy and vain speculation, and attempt to give spiritual substance, as some imagine they have done, to the white and ruddy complexion, to the head of fine gold, to the dove's eyes washed in milk, to the lily lips, diamond hands, ivory body, marble feet, &c., &c., than to the above-quoted earthquake, flaming fire, burning coals and lightnings, in the Psalm of David. Magnificent and sublime as are both these classes of figures in a poetical point of view, they but clearly show our poverty and weakness when brought to admit the thought, that they exhibit the highest effort of the human understanding, to manifest, though only metaphorically, something of Jehovah's divine majesty and supreme power, whose glory fills heaven and earth and the immensity of space!

CHAPTER VI.

ARGUMENT OF CHAP. VI.

(V. 1.) The *daughters of Jerusalem* offer their services to the mourning Bride to go and seek with her her absent Lord—*i. e.*, the Kings of Persia and of the Medes offer their aid to the captive daughter of Zion to go to Jerusalem and seek her absent Bridegroom there. (Vv. 2, 3.) She accepts and tells them that the time of the re-appearance of her Bridegroom in His garden on Mount Zion (as foretold by Jeremiah) had come, that He accordingly must wait there her arrival, and that there He would renew the Covenant with her. (Vv. 4—11.) The Bridegroom appears to her at Jerusalem, highly commends her faithfulness unto Him during His absence, and the impression which her confession and zeal and love have made on the nations among whom she sojourned during her captivity. (V. 12.) The Bride laments the absence of the Ark, Mercy-seat, and Cherubim, from the Most Holy of the second temple.

* Ps. xviii. 6—14.

THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM.

1. Whither is thy Beloved gone,
O thou fairest among women?
What direction hath thy Beloved taken,
That we may seek Him with thee?

THE CHURCH.

2. My Beloved hath gone down into His garden,
To the beds of spices :
To feed in the gardens,
And to gather lilies.
3. I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine—
Even He that feedeth among the lilies.

In the preceding chapter we saw what strong public confessions the captive Bride had made at Babylon, and what salutary effects these had produced upon the daughters of Jerusalem (on some of the Gentile nations), so much so that a royal proclamation was made, declaring to all nations and tongues the supremacy, omnipotence, and majesty of the God of Zion, whom His captive Church confessed unto death, and whose absence she so disconsolately deplored, and also the fearful punishment which every Babylonian subject would be visited with if he should venture to utter any disrespectful word or blasphemy against the God of the captives of Judea. But the present chapter opens with an account of great progress on the part of the daughters of Jerusalem. Here they are represented not only as convinced that the God of Israel was the greatest and holiest God, yea, the God of gods; not only as ready and happy to observe the royal edict and not to speak aught against Him, but as decidedly determined to seek Him. At the same time we remark in their address *two words* of great importance, and of comprehensive signification; these are “with thee,” *i.e.*, we shall aid thee, to seek thy God, but as for ourselves, we are contented with our own gods, and are neither ready nor willing to abandon them. We remember that the colloquy between the two parties began on the occasion of the daughter of Zion having seen that the Lord had aban-

doned her, and having learned from the prophecies that the calling of the Gentiles cannot be far off; she thought it might happen that the Gentiles (or at least some of them) might be called into the Lord's favour before her return to it, she therefore conjured them that should they find the Lord before her, they would pray and intercede on her behalf, and tell Him that his captive Bride waits in languishing love and hope for his return to her. This elicited on the part of the daughters of Jerusalem the question about the character of that God whom the captive Bride preferred to all others, and also the already known confession and the description given by the daughter of Zion of her absent Lord, and the reason of her preferring Him to all other gods. The answer and explanation they found highly satisfactory, and quite convincing. But these Gentiles, although convinced of the superiority of the great God of Zion, were by no means prepared immediately to abandon their dumb idols of wood and stone, and set themselves to seek diligently that great God for themselves and for the salvation of their own souls. They offered themselves willingly to aid the captive Bride in seeking her absent Lord, but added, "with thee," not alone! These two interesting points, the offer of aid by the daughters of Jerusalem to the daughter of Zion, and the condition of the former "with thee," can be explained, yea, pointed to in sacred history.

It is clear that when the great King Nebuchadnezzar published the above cited proclamation, he was only convinced of the greatness and omnipotence of the God of Israel, but had not faith sufficient to draw any spiritual benefit from his conviction and to reduce it to practice. It was only after his extraordinary humiliation that we hear him say, "And at the end of those days, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me; and I blessed the Most High; and praised and honoured Him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand, or sav unto him, "What doest thou?" And after his comp'

restoration to his throne and dominion, he said farther, "Now, I Nebuchadnezzar, praise, and extol, and honour the King of heaven, all whose words are truth, and His ways justice; and those that walk in pride, He is able to abase."* Here we see that Nebuchadnezzar was at last truly converted unto God; but how he then conducted himself with regard to his court and people, especially with regard to captive Israel, whether he made any endeavours to convert his subjects, or at least his courtiers, or whether he continued long on his throne after his conversion and restoration, are questions which we cannot answer; they are things hidden from us; for sacred history is completely silent on the subject. From the fact that Daniel concludes his 4th chapter with the passage just quoted, and begins the next with the account of an event which took place on the last day of the life and reign of Belshazzar, we may, perhaps, conclude that he lived but a very short time after his restoration; and this is confirmed by chronological calculations. Moreover, from the memorable event which happened on the last night of the reign of Belshazzar, we learn two things: 1st, that Nebuchadnezzar's royal edict, and all his public testimonies to the God of Israel, as well as the loud confessions of the captives, and the miracle of the fiery furnace, must have left very little or no impression on the drunken Belshazzar and his court. Not only were the holy vessels of the Lord's sanctuary brought forth and profaned, but at the banquet they worshipped idols and abomination of every sort and description. 2d, We learn that the past testimonies and confessions were not altogether forgotten at court; for the old queen came forward and recommended Daniel as a man in whom was the spirit of the holy God. We may conclude also from the vigorous and rebuking address of Daniel to that monarch and his court, that he spoke to them of a God already known and feared in Babylon: "But thou his son (*i.e.*, son of the humbled and converted Nebuchadnezzar), O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this (*i.e.*, all that had happened to thy father); but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven, and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them, and thou hast

* Dan. iv. 34—37.

praised the gods of silver and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not nor hear, nor know; and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified," &c.* It is clear as day that such language could not have been employed by the prophet to a heathen king and court were it not that the knowledge of the God of Israel was at that time widely spread in Babylon, and especially in the palace, though they neglected to make a right use of it.

We pass on to Darius the Mede. It is evident that that prince knew the God of Israel and Daniel his servant, even before he came to the throne; as he instantly exalted and respected Daniel, and often showed that he feared and adored God. We know also with what reluctance, and with what grief Darius yielded when obliged to give his consent to the execution of his own irrevocable law (procured from him by malice) against his beloved friend and faithful servant Daniel. The certainty with which he uttered the words, "Thy God whom thou servest continually, He will deliver thee," is astonishingly sublime, and shows his knowledge and fear of the living God, and his faith in Him, and also the veneration and esteem in which he held his faithful servant. When Daniel, when bound and cast into the lion's den, was delivered by the Angel of God, and taken out in triumph, and when his enemies were cast in and devoured, the astonished and delighted king immediately published a proclamation to all the different nations of his mighty empire—a proclamation far in advance in knowledge, faith, and confession, compared with that of Nebuchadnezzar. The edict of Nebuchadnezzar only punished the blasphemer of the God of Israel, while that of Darius reads thus: "I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom, men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for He is the living God, and steadfast for ever; His kingdom is one that shall never be destroyed, and His dominion is unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and worketh signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, who hath delivereth Daniel from the power of the lions."† But as people are not converted by royal proclamations, and as it is evident that no farther steps were taken to teach the nations to know and adore the living God as the *only* God, the Creator and Saviour of

* Dan. v. 22, 23.

† Dan. vi. 26, 27.

their souls, and thus make them abandon their idols of wood and stone, and serve Him alone, so the poor daughters of Jerusalem remained stationary, without any progress in that direction. All that they acquired was a knowledge that the Beloved God of the captive Church of Zion was the greatest God they had ever heard of before, and that He worked wonders for those that fear and love Him. But instead of beginning earnestly to seek and serve Him, and acknowledge and adore Him as their only God, they were only moved to compassion by the sufferings of His severely punished Bride, and offered themselves to aid her in seeking Him, and to help her on in her endeavour to gain His favour again.

But the prophecy of Solomon that the Gentile nations (under the metaphor of daughters of Jerusalem), would make the generous offer to the captive daughter of Zion to aid her in seeking her Beloved, received its first fulfilment in the declaration of Cyrus, king of Persia, made in the first year of his reign, "Thus saith Cyrus, King of Persia: The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem which is in Judea. Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judea, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (He is the God), which is in Jerusalem. And whoso remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place (the Gentiles) help him on with silver and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill-offering for the house of God, that is in Jerusalem."* On the very surface of this surprising proclamation, we see how widely and effectually the knowledge of the great God of Zion must have been spread at that time through the vast dominions of the king of Persia, that in the first year of his reign he openly and boldly proclaimed in the midst of his heterogeneous pagan subjects, that it was the God of Jerusalem who gave him all the kingdoms he possessed, and that he would (at the head of all his subjects), aid the captive Bride of that God to return to Jerusalem, and to build there the temple to the glory of His name † This is

* Ezra. i. 2—4

† Alas, we know a Christian nation and government, to whom the God of Jerusalem gave dominion over a vast empire in the East.

not the place to speak of the wonderful and literal fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecies regarding that king, but the exploits he performed, and the plans and wars which he successfully executed both before and after coming to the sole dominion, shew that he must have known all along the oracles of the God of Zion regarding him; and that he was greatly emboldened by them in all his gigantic undertakings. Therefore, as soon as he saw himself confirmed sole ruler of all the kingdoms then under Persian sway, he hastened to fulfil his duty towards the supreme Governor of the universe who had long before prepared power and dominion for him.

It was at that time that the seventy years of the prophet Jeremiah, during which the land of Judea was to lie waste and repose, were at an end; and when, according to his prophecy and other promises, the Lord was to return again to Jerusalem (after having said, "I will go, and return to my place till they acknowledge their offences," &c., Hos. v. 15) along with His captive Church from Babylon; and when the temple was to be rebuilt, and the Church re-established. To this period the humiliated and repenting Bride now pointed at Babylon. When the daughters of Jerusalem asked her, "Whither is thy Beloved gone? . . . We will seek Him with thee," her answer was that, according to his never-failing promises, He must now have come down again into "His garden" at Jerusalem, to visit once more His "beds of spices," to feed once more His

of more than 150 millions of immortal souls, plunged into a dreary labyrinth of heathen impurities and abominations, or Mahometan imposture, fanaticism, and degradation. And how did that Christian government behave during an entire century of absolute dominion? Did these rulers issue proclamations that it was the God of Zion who gave them that dominion, and that they would there build a temple to His glory and aid His cause, and assist His Church in her efforts to spread light in that vast region of darkness? Ah no! they had not the moral courage to avow openly either their God or their religion, but they had courage enough to discountenance the Lord's servants and discourage His witnesses—to dandle and flatter the most horrid rites and victims of heathen pollution—to encourage and flatter idolatry and fanaticism. They cradled vipers to bite them. They sharpened the teeth of tigers (their beloved Sepoys), to tear in pieces their own wives and innocent children, and to cover that vast country with blood and horrid crime! Will not the pagan Cyrus rise in the day of judgment against that government? Will not the Sepoys say on that day, "you have put the sword into our hands, by hiding the light from us, and leaving us in darkness?" (This was written on the day when the harrowing news of the Delhi and Cawnpore massacres reached this place, Algiers.)

lambs "in the gardens" of Moriah and Zion, and once more "to gather lilies," His saints with their praises and prayers the fruits of His garden. We should also keep in mind that the venerable and famous Daniel, was then highly honoured in the court of king Cyrus;* and that no doubt, as soon as the latter was sole master of the empire, he asked Daniel where he should begin the fulfilment of all that was foretold regarding him, "Whither is thy Beloved gone, that I may seek Him with thee?" "How am I to begin to fulfil all His desire as it has been foretold of me?" To which Daniel answered, in the name of the whole Church, "My Beloved hath gone down into His garden to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies," *i.e.*, my Beloved must now have come down once more to visit His favourite Mount Zion; for so He promised to plant again His garden at Jerusalem at this very time. He is now waiting there for the fulfilment of thy task to send back His captives, and to rebuild His city and temple." As soon as the proclamation of Cyrus was known to the captive Bride, she exultingly exclaimed, "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine, even He who feedeth among the lilies" (or, "He feedeth [once more] among the lilies.") And she had much reason thus to exult, as the fears she had that her Bridegroom, during her captivity and widowhood, would adopt another nation as His bride and her rival, were now entirely dissipated, when she saw the daughters of Jerusalem were only ready to seek him "with her," to aid her, but not to be a rival to her; while her hopes in His promises were literally fulfilled. "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine," *i.e.*, not only does He return unto me, but He does so without any rival; I alone am His.

If for some mysterious purposes, the Lord allowed the work at Jerusalem to be stopped for a while after the death of Cyrus, its restoration under Darius king of Persia, and its continuation under his successors, and their new edicts and proclamations with regard to it, continue to explain, and to illustrate most strikingly this passage of our Song. In the order which Darius gave to the governors of Syria and other adjacent countries of Judea, we read, "Let the work of this

* Dan. vi. 28.

house of God alone; let the governors and elders of the Jews build this house of God in his place. Moreover, I make a decree what ye shall do to the elders of these Jews for the building of this house of God; that of the king's goods, even of all the tribute beyond the river, forthwith expenses be given unto these men, that they may not be hindered. And that which they have need of, both young bullocks and rams, and lambs for the burnt-offerings of the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the appointment of the priests which are at Jerusalem, let it be given them day by day, without fail. That they may offer sacrifices of sweet savours unto the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons."* The letters which Artaxerxes, king of Persia, gave to Ezra on his leaving Babylon for Jerusalem are still more astonishing: "And I, even I, Artaxerxes the king, do make a decree to all the treasurers which are beyond the river, that whatsoever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, shall require of you, it be done speedily. Unto an hundred talents of silver, and to an hundred measures of wheat. . . . Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven let it be diligently done for the house of the God of heaven: for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king, and his sons? . . . And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God that is in thine hand (*i.e.*, the law), set magistrates and judges which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God; and teach ye them that know them not," &c.† What wonderful faith and zeal, liberality, and nobility in heathen kings with regard of the God of Israel and His Church! How religious the language and how pious the expressions! How many a so-called Christian king will these noble pagans put to shame in the day of judgment? These and other events of the same kind, such as Nehemiah's petition addressed to the same king Artaxerxes, and the princely aid, and strong letters of recommendation which he gave him, and the things which Nehemiah thereby accomplished, are so many illustrations of the prophetic passages of our Song, shewing how the daughters of Jerusalem offered and afforded aid and means to the daughter

* Ezra vi. 7—10.

† Ezra vii. 21—26.

of Zion to seek her God, the celestial Bridegroom of His Church.

Before we can advance farther with our Song, we must for a moment follow the returning captives to Jerusalem, and see their behaviour, their zeal, devotion, and strong confidence in the Lord who in wrath remembereth mercy. Immediately on her arrival in her desolate country in the midst of ruins, the first work of the Bride was, not to fortify her cities against the numerous and fierce enemies by which she was surrounded, but to build an altar and to offer on it sacrifices to her provoked God; and this she did in anticipation of the building of the temple. "And when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem. Then stood up Joshua, the son of Jozedeck, and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren, and builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt-offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses, the man of God. And they set the altar upon his bases: for fear was upon them, because of the people of those countries (*i.e.*, they hastened to build the altar unto the God of Zion, who is the strongest fortress and shield against all enemies); and they offered burnt-offerings thereon unto the Lord, even the morning and evening burnt offerings. . . . From the first day of the seventh month began they to offer burnt-offerings unto the Lord. But the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid."* On the second month of the second year after their return from Babylon, they began to build the temple of God, with the aid and means afforded them by Cyrus; and according to his orders, the Syrians and Sidonians rendered to them the same services as they did to Solomon on the building of his temple, by cutting cedars in Lebanon. In thus availing herself of the aid of the daughters of Jerusalem, the Bride had first the precedent of King Solomon, and second, she had the prophecies of Isaiah in which the Lord expressed His will that this temple should be built by the aid and at the expense of the daughters of Jerusalem, the Gentile nations. Whether the Bride considered this as an indication of the approaching calling in of the Gentiles, or as

* Ezra iii. 3-6

another chastisement by which the Lord intended to humble her for her past pride and sinfulness, she had become so humble and submissive that she asked no questions, but acted according to the will of her Master. At the same time there was no presumption on the part of those daughters of Jerusalem who contributed so much to the building of the temple, and even to its services. They acknowledged the daughter of Zion to be the only Bride of Zion's God, owned her exclusive great privileges notwithstanding her late humiliation; and all that they expected was that the Church at Jerusalem should pray to her Lord on their behalf, as we saw from the royal letters and proclamations. But when the malicious and envious enemies of the Church, the hypocritical Samaritans, "came unto Zerubbabel and to the chief of the elders, and said unto them, Let us build with you; for we seek your God as ye do, and we do sacrifice unto Him since the days of Esar-haddon, king of Assur, who brought us up hither;" the Bride rigorously and resolutely repulsed their false pretensions. "But Zerubbabel, and Joshua, and the rest of the chiefs of the fathers of Israel said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God, but we ourselves together will build unto the Lord God of Israel, as king Cyrus king of Persia has commanded us."* The future behaviour of these deceitful enemies justified the fears of the returned captives and the repulse they gave to this mongrel race of pagans and Jews. Besides that, they still worshipped their idols though they acknowledged the supremacy of the God of Jerusalem, and sacrificed unto Him on altars expressly forbidden by the law, as they were out of Jerusalem. The time had not yet come for the calling of the Gentiles, which was reserved for the coming of Christ, "the root of Jesse," the ensign lifted up to the nations, inviting them to come. Until that time the daughter of Zion was to remain the only Bride, and could therefore say with regard to every other nation, "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine," exclusively mine. The daughters of Jerusalem might then enjoy the privilege of aiding the Bride in seeking the Lord, in building the temple, and even in furnishing sacrifices for the altar; but the only lawful priests and Levites belonged to the daughter of Zion, and

* Ezra iv. 1-3.

none of any other nation, even though truly converted, could approach the altar, or enter into the temple where the altar stood. The kings who so generously aided the Bride understood this, and without touching any of her privileges, demanded of her only to pray to the Lord for them. While these semi-idolaters pretended that they lawfully offered sacrifice unto the God of Zion, their priests were false, their Levites fabricated, and their altars directly opposed to the law of God. It was the privileges of the sanctuary that they envied and coveted, but which the Bride neither would nor indeed could concede to them. Hence began their oppositions, their calumnies and accusations, which caused for a time the building of the temple to stop, while the Bride humbly waited for a manifestation of her Beloved.

THE LORD.

4. Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah—
Lovely as Jerusalem—
Terrible as bannered hosts.
5. Turn about thine eyes from before me ;
For they have excited me.
Thy hair is like a flock of goats,
That feeding descendeth from Gilead.
6. Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep
Which come up from the washing pool,
All of which have twins,
And none is bereaved among them.
7. Like a slice of pomegranate,
Are thy temples through thy veil.
8. Though there be threescore queens,
And fourscore concubines,
And virgins without number ;
9. She is still the only one,
My dove, my faithful (accomplished) one :
She is the only one of her mother—
The choice one of her that bare her :
The daughters saw her and praised her—
The queens and concubines, and admired her.
10. Who is she that looketh forth as the morning,
Fair as the moon, bright as the sun,
And terrible as bannered hosts ?

In the first three verses of this chapter we had the offer of the daughters of Jerusalem to aid the captive Bride in seeking her Beloved, the acceptance of that aid by the Bride, her return, her beginning to build the temple, and her patient waiting for the manifestation of her Beloved. In the passage before us, we have a description of the return of the Beloved to His long-lamenting and desolate Bride, a renewal of His declaration of love and attachment, and of the high eulogiums He again bestowed on His beloved Church. Is it asked when and how was that declaration of the Lord's return to his Bride made to her after her return from Babylon? Let us hear the voice of the inspired messengers of the Beloved, and examine the oracles delivered by them at that period to the Church in the name of God. After the building of the temple had been interrupted for a time through the calumnies and accusations of the Samaritans and the governors of Palestine and Syria, it came to pass that in the second year of Darius, the word of God came unto Haggai, the prophet, saying, "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house (the temple) lie waste? . . . Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord. . . Then Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua, the son of Josedeck, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, . . and the people did fear before the Lord. Then spake Haggai, the Lord's messenger, in the Lord's message unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith the Lord."* Here we have the Lord's return after a long absence clearly announced; and about the renewal of His declarations of love and divine favour to His still beloved Church we must read further. A month after the above message, and in the midst of the Bride's greatest activity in the building of the temple, the Lord sent His messenger again unto His Church, and among other comforting, consoling, and encouraging declarations, said: "Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord, and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedeck, the high priest, and be strong all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work; for I am with you, saith the Lord of Hosts. According to

* Hag i. 4, 7—8, 12, 13.

the word (or, condition) that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, and my Spirit remaineth among you; fear ye not. For thus saith the Lord of Hosts, yet once, it is a little while (*i.e.* after a short time) and I will shake (or ‘storm,’ or ‘make tremble’) the heavens and the earth, and the sea and the dry land; and I will shake all nations; and the Desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts.”* The above quotation is the marrow and substance of that prophet’s oracles. We have quoted largely from them because they do not only cast a general light on our passage, but because many of the figures will be illustrated by this remarkable prophecy, as we shall see, when we enter on the explanation of them.

In the meantime we take only from the above oracle the fact of the Beloved’s announcement to His Bride that He was with her, so that we may establish the period to which the passage of the Song must refer. It is certain that an address in such glowing language as that contained in verses 4—10 must imply that the Lord was then with His Church. But one thing we must observe, and very remarkable it is, that while the Lord announced to His Bride that He was with her, and would aid and protect her in the building of His temple; yea, even while He said regarding it, “I will take pleasure in it and will be glorified,” He never promised to *dwell in it*, as He did regarding the first temple when He said, “Let them make a sanctuary, and I will dwell in the midst of them!” His promise to come into that temple, and to fill it with His glory, was distinctly a promise for the future after the “little time” (or while), after having shaken heaven and earth, and the nations, *i.e.*, after having shaken all kingdoms by great convulsions and changes, and prepared the Roman empire for the apostolic work, and having bowed the heaven and come down Himself on earth. When this prophecy was renewed by the last of the prophets he said that the Angel of the Covenant would suddenly enter into His temple, clearly shewing that until then He did not and would not enter it nor dwell in it! But even Haggai in the above quoted prophecy, while he declared that the Lord’s visit to the temple would only be

* Hag. ii. 4—7.

in a future time (yet a little while), stated definitively that for the time being His Spirit only would rest among them,* *i.e.*, the spirit of prophecy His representative, "For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."† Such is also the sense of the reference to the Covenant made with their fathers, namely, after having encouraged the chiefs and the people in general to build the temple, He tells them the condition, saying, "According to the word (or condition) that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt," which was: "Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my Covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people, for all the earth is mine," &c.;‡ while His condescending to dwell in the sanctuary in the midst of them was a peculiar favour, and did not enter into the Covenant conditions; and to this He afterwards adds, "And my Spirit remaineth among you; fear ye not," *i.e.*, He will lead and protect you, though He will not enter into this temple until the great appointed time, there being now no Ark of the Covenant, no Mercy-Seat, and no Cherubim, that He could dwell there. This fact will prove of importance to us as we advance further in the Song along with the progressive events of these periods.

"Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah—lovely as Jerusalem—terrible as an army with banners." After a long absence of her Beloved, after all her sufferings and humiliating calamities, He whom her soul still loved, and even more ardently and sincerely than ever before, came again to declare to her the unchangeableness of His affection. Though greatly reduced by the affliction she endured in the hot furnace of her captivity—though in number but one of an hundred to what she once was—though poor and needy with regard to this world, He who was afterwards to become poor for her sake, praises the beauty and excellency of His Bride in the same glowing language, and employs many of the same figures as He did in the days of her greatest prosperity and glory under the reign of her magnificent King Solomon. Tirzah was a finely situated and splendidly built city of the ten tribes. Jeroboam made it the capital of his kingdom, and it continued to be the royal residence of these kings until the reign of Omri, who

* See Hag. ii. 5.

† Rev. xix. 10.

‡ Exod. xix. 5, 6.

changed it for Samaria. It is probable that this beautiful city escaped ruin during the wars of Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, when he led captive the ten tribes. If it suffered during that catastrophe, the new colonists might have repaired it and restored it to its first splendour. But if not, we may allow that Solomon employed that comparison according to what Tirzah was in his own time. It is not so with regard to Jerusalem; for Solomon, speaking by the Spirit, of a period when this city was to be in ruins, could not refer to her as a pattern of beauty, nor say of her any more with the Psalmist: "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth," as it was then only an heap of desolation. While, therefore, the inspired author takes the figure of *beauty* from Tirzah, he takes that of *loveliness*, or comeliness, from Jerusalem, for it was regarding desolate Zion, and ruined Jerusalem, that the Lord said: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me."* O, then, what a glorious image this was when applied to the restored captive Church, who, like Jerusalem, looked as an heap of ruins, a handful of beggars, a few broken-hearted, humiliated, poor and needy vassals of the kings of Persia! Ah, but that Church was comely and lovely in the sight of her Beloved, as was Zion and Jerusalem, though in ruins; because she was still His only Church, and Bride, and heritage on earth. And it was owing to her favour in the sight of the Lord that she was also "terrible like bannered hosts;" for though she was in open and ruined cities, surrounded by many mighty and deadly enemies, who looked with jealous indignation at her re-building the temple and the walls of Jerusalem, and concocted many dangerous conspiracies against her; and though her noble architect Nehemiah and his devoted labourers had to keep their spears in one hand while building with the other, still, "The wall was finished . . . in fifty and two days. And it came to pass that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes,

* Is. xlix. 14, 15.

for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God."* One requires only to read in this book of the conspiracies, plans, and combinations of those embittered enemies by which the handful of helpless captives were surrounded, to see that, poor and feeble as the Church of God then was in every temporal respect, she was to her enemies a strong army with banners. They feared her because her Beloved was with her, and because she was still beautiful and comely in His eyes. Now we beg the reader to compare carefully the prophecies which we quoted above from Haggai with the verse of our Song which we have now explained, and see how identical they are. The Lord, by the prophet, comforts His mourning Bride,—who is disconsolate when comparing her present temporal condition, the poor appearance of her present temple with that of Solomon, which was covered and inlaid with plates of massive gold,—and tells her not to mourn, that the "silver and gold was His," and that He would "take pleasure" in this poorly built house as He did in the former, yea, that its glory would be greater still than that of the former, because He would (after a little while) enter into it as Saviour, as Prince of peace, as God manifested in the flesh. Is not this a full explanation of the 4th verse of our Song, where, in figurative language, the same mourning Bride is told by the same Lord that she was even now as beautiful in His sight as Tirzah, and as lovely as Jerusalem! And when He said, "Be strong, O Zerubbabel, be strong, O Joshua, and be ye strong all people of the land. . . . I am with you; fear ye not," is not this as if intended for an explanation of the phrase in our Song, which represents the otherwise helpless Bride as "terrible as bannered hosts!" But we shall see more of this as we proceed with the following verses.

"Turn about thine eyes from before me; for they have excited me." This expression is substantially equivalent to the following, "Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears; for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord;"† "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion . . . shake thyself from the dust; arise and sit down, O Jerusalem. . . . In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will

* Neh. vi. 15, 16.

† Jer. xxxi. 16.

I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.”* But to understand it in its particular reference we must remember the ardent prayers and humble supplications sent up by Daniel at Babylon, by Ezra and Nehemiah, in those cloudy and calamitous days, in the name of the whole Church. Daniel, after having made a complete confession of the sins of his people, and implored pardon from the sin-pardoning God, continued, “O my God, incline thine ear and hear; open thine eyes and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name. . . . O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God; for the city, and thy people, are called by thy name.”† Ezra said, “O Lord, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God; for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens. From the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass (in a guilty state) unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, and our priests, been delivered into the hands of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil, and to confusion of face as it is this day.”‡ And Nehemiah, after fasting and mourning with lamentations and tears for days, said, “I beseech thee, O Lord, God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy to them that love him and keep his commandments; let now thine ear be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee; both I and my father’s house have sinned.”§ Another ardent prayer was offered at Jerusalem by the same servant of God, when he was surrounded by great difficulties and dangers in the midst of a great work, which he undertook and carried on vigorously in spite of many snares, privations, and adversities. In such a lamenting and supplicating position the humbled and broken-hearted Bride steadfastly directed her weeping eyes towards her provoked God and divine Bridegroom, fearing that the calamities were not yet at an end, and imploring His pardon,

* Is. lii. 1, 2; liv. 8.

† Dan. ix. 18, 19.

‡ Ezra ix. 6, 7.

§ Neh. i. 5, 6.

protection, and favour; and while so doing, the work in which she was engaged suffered great delay. The Lord saw it, was moved to compassion, and said unto her, by the prophet Haggai above quoted, "Turn about thine eyes from before me; for they have excited me," *i.e.*, "Thou hast gained the object of thy prayer and supplications, thy tears have excited me to mercy and compassion; lift now thyself from the ground, shake off the dust and ashes, take courage, 'be strong, O ye people of the land, for I am with you, fear ye not, build the house, repair the walls; for this is my will and my pleasure.'" The history of that Church in her infancy furnishes us with a parallel incident. When the newly called and adopted Bride found herself between the Red Sea and the pursuing army of Egypt, she was terrified and paralyzed, and cried unto the Lord, at a time when she should have pushed forward by faith in His omnipotence and never-failing promises. The Lord therefore said unto Moses (and by him to the whole Church), "Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward."* Not that the Lord despised the prayers and supplications of His people at any time, but that when activity is needed prayer must give way to action, and supplication to faith. When we are called upon to go forward, to be up and doing, we cannot spend that time upon our knees; and if we do so, it shows that it is groundless fear and want of faith that has brought us to our knees. The distinct promises of Jehovah to Israel in Egypt, and His marvellous works accomplished there before their eyes, were such that, had they had sufficient faith in Jehovah's omnipotence and faithfulness, they would have marched forward without crying and without hesitation, in the full assurance that He "who measured the waters in the hollow of his hand," was able to lead His people through them, and bury their enemies in them. Indeed, the spiritual state of that Church at the period we are treating of was greatly different, and so the language of her gracious God was not in a rebuking, but in an encouraging tone. In the midst of ruins, and surrounded with bitter enemies and dangerous conspiracies, the returned captive Church lay prostrate on her face in tears and supplica-

* Exod. xiv. 15.

tions, with her eyes directed towards the Lord of Zion. But her gracious Saviour sent His messenger to tell her in the sweetest, most soothing, and encouraging words, that prayer had gained its object, that it was activity that was now required of her, to build the temple, to strengthen the walls of Jerusalem without fear or hesitation, in the full assurance that the Lord who had pledged His promises to her was able to rebuke the threatening tempest and restrain and control all her enraged and malicious enemies.

Close to the injunction of the Bridegroom to His Bride to continue the work of the Lord without relaxation, He rehearses *some* of the compliments which He made to His Church in the days of her greatest prosperity. Now as then He tells her that in His sight her "hair was like a flock of goats, that feeding descendeth from mount Gilead." This figure we explained in chap. iv. 1 to be descriptive of the different companies of worshippers ascending and descending mount Zion to and from the temple services. (See there our explanation at large.) We have also remarked above that the first thing which the returned captives undertook, was the erection of an altar on the spot where the first temple stood, in anticipation of rearing it up soon out of its ruins, and on that altar the morning and evening sacrifices were regularly offered, and also the additional offerings of the Sabbaths and feast-days, and thither the companies of worshippers now regularly repaired. The repetition therefore of the same compliment showed that the beauty of His Bride did not consist in her outward appearance, in the richness of her attire, nor in the earthly magnificence of her temple, nor indeed in the number of worshippers, but in the disposition of her heart which He alone can know—that the handful of returned captives, repairing to the altar, placed among ruins, or afterwards, to a very poorly constructed temple, to worship Him, possessed the same beauty in His sight as did those numerous, rich, mighty, and happy multitudes which once proceeded with the voice of joy and praise to the splendid temple built by Solomon. The above-cited oracle by Haggai is such an explanation of this passage.

Though we need not enter again into a minute explanation of the figures employed in verses 5—7, after that already given in chap. iv. verses 1—5, we think it of im-

portance as well as interest to place the two passages, side by side, and draw a parallel between them, and see which of the former figures are repeated in the second, which of them modified, and which of them are entirely left out; for, on studying the subject, it seems clear that these variations are not only intentional, but that they were caused by the difference between the state and circumstances of the Church at these two distinct periods.

CHAPTER IV. 1.

Behold, thou art fair, my love!
 Behold, thou art fair!
 Thine eyes are like doves within thy veil,
 Thy hair is like a flock of goats
 That feeding descendeth from Mount Gilead.

CHAPTER VI. 4, 5.

Thou are beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah—
 Lovely as Jerusalem—
 Terrible as bannered hosts.
 Turn about thine eyes from before me;
 For they have excited me.
 Thy hair is like a flock of goats
 That feeding descendeth from Gilead.

Now we beg the reader to compare carefully our explanation of these parallel passages, and keep in mind the great change of circumstances that took place in the latter period of the Church from that of the former, and he will see how wonderfully adapted are the modifications of the figures in the second passage, referring to the turbulent times of the second temple, from what they are in the former, which refers to the happy period, and prosperous state of the Church in the days of Solomon. The struggling Church, in the midst of ruins and of all kind of danger from bitter and numerous enemies, needed more encouragement than in the days of her prosperity. Instead of telling simply as formerly that she was fair in his sight, He tells her this by comparison; that even in the midst of her ruins she was beautiful as Tirzah in all her splendour, lovely as Jerusa-

lem, "the joy of the whole earth" in her magnificence, whose "walls are continually before Him engraven on the palms of His hands," and that even now, though seemingly poor and forsaken, as terrible to her enemies as an army with banners, more terrible than when in the days of old she could muster many armies; for her Beloved was with her to protect her. Instead of, as in the former passage, simply praising her eyes as simple, faithful, graceful, &c., like doves, he announces to her in the latter that her dove-like eyes, directed to Him in prayer and supplication, had accomplished their designed object, had moved him to compassion, and that she should now go forth courageously to action. As was natural, the last figure of her hair or looks, which, as we have explained it, signifies the moving companies of worshippers ascending and descending Mount Zion, is quite the same in both passages; for it was evidently intended to assure her that though now poor and needy, her temple not possessing as much in brass as the former in gold, and her worshipping members but few in number, still she was as precious as ever in the eyes of her Beloved.

CHAPTER IV. 2.

Thy teeth are like an equal-sized flock,
Which come up from the washing-pool;
All of which have twins,
And none is bereaved among them.

CHAPTER V. 6.

Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep,
Which come up from the washing-pool;
All of which have twins,
And none is bereaved among them.

In this parallel, there is only one slight modification in the first line—the former has, "an equal sized flock," while the latter has simply "a flock of sheep." Here again we invite the reader to examine our explanation given there at large. Then let him remark that, if our suggestion there be right, that spiritually, the teeth, the grinders of food, signify faith,

hope, wisdom, humility, and other qualities by which the children of God eat and prepare for digestion the bread of heaven, (and certainly if these graces and qualities are all *equal sized*, in corresponding proportions, they are wonderfully adapted to invigorate the soul and make her prosperous), then the change in the second passage, from an equal-sized to a simple flock, may have a very deep signification, which we leave to the reader to suggest according to his own judgment. But it was also suggested there that these figures had a primary reference to the temple, and that the teeth might refer to the rows of outer chambers attached to Solomon's temple round about (but this explanation the reader must see in its place, where it is explained at large), and it is remarkable that the second temple had likewise outer-rows of chambers for the habitation of the priests and Levites, and for magazines, but in it they were *irregularly built*.* This is a striking circumstance, but no less a fact.

CHAPTER IV. 3.

Like the scarlet thread are thy lips,
 And thy speech is comely ;
 Like a slice of pomegranate
 Are thy temples through thy veil.

CHAPTER VI. 7.

Like a slice of pomegranate,
 Are thy temples through thy veil.

Here we have in the second passage no longer any mention of the "scarlet lips," nor of the "comely speech." But we must refer the reader again to our explanation of these figures, and, after perusing it, let him remember that in the second temple, the *second veil* covered only an empty room, and that the Urim and Thummin spoke no more, and that there was no Asaph, or Jeduthun, or Heman, and their numerous bands of musical Levites to solemnize the temple services, and rival the choirs of heaven in their angelic songs of adoration and praise. They indeed collected a small band of returned captive Levites, but it must have been a

* See Ezra x. 6 ; Neh. x. 39, 40, xiii. 5.

sad sight to those who reflected on that noble band composed and organized by David, under chief musicians, who were prophets at the same time. As regards the figure of the "temples like a slice of pomegranate," and which we suggested may primarily refer to the decorations of the upper posts of the entrance into the porch, and also above the second veil (see *in loco*), these might have been imitated in the second temple at both the upper door posts, though the famous Jachin and Boaz were no more at the door and entrance of the porch.

CHAPTER IV. 4, 5.

Thy neck is like the tower of David . . .

Thy two breasts are like two young fawns. . . .

Both these verses are entirely absent in this passage in chap. vi.; but if the reader will examine our explanation of these figures, and remember that in the second temple there was neither a porch with an high tower as in the former, nor the Mercy-seat of the Ark and Cherubim in the inner sanctuary, he will not only see that those figures could not have been used with regard to the Church in the second temple, but also that our explanation of them is thereby confirmed.

But while her changed and reduced circumstances caused a change and abridgement of the metaphorical compliments above considered, these losses are more than repaired by the glorious declaration of the divine Bridegroom in the following passage, regarding His proved, humble, and faithful Bride. "Though there be threescore queens, and fourscore concubines (or wives of a second rank), and virgins without number; yet she is the only one, my dove (or, "yet this one only is my dove"), my faithful one. She is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her: The daughters saw her and praised her,—the queens and concubines and admired her." The noble behaviour of the captive Bride at Babylon, the uninterrupted and vigorous testimony she kept up there before mighty monarchs, princes, satraps, governors, and many different peoples and nations, her self-denial and perseverance in the worship of her only God, in the midst of dangers, persecutions, and threatenings of death, yea in the midst of devour-

ing flames and raging lions, merited and procured for her such a declaration from her Beloved. And here we remark in the first place, that while in verse 4 the Bridegroom began to address her as usual in the second person, "Thou art beautiful, O my love," and continued the same in the following three verses, He changes the style in verse 8, and begins to talk of her in the third person, "My dove is only one," and not "Thou my dove art," &c. This shows that His declaration was made to the nations, to the daughters of Jerusalem, who, after all they had learned from His Church, of His glory and omnipotence, only offered to aid His Bride in seeking Him, but could not or would not go a step farther in abandoning their idols and in seeking Him for themselves. The sense therefore of His declaration may be paraphrased thus: "Though there have been many monarchs and princes, and individuals without number among the daughters of Jerusalem who have learned to know me, who have proclaimed publicly my omnipotence, omniscience, and superiority, and have repeatedly made open confessions of my being the God of gods and Lord of lords, still when the question has come to abandon their own lovers (their strange gods), and to seek and follow me, and give themselves entirely to me, they have been found wanting; while my dove, my faithful Bride, my beloved Church, the only daughter of Zion, the chosen seed of Abraham, has alone followed me through fire and water, remained faithful in the fiery furnace and in the lion's den, a constancy, a perseverance, a self-denial, and a faithfulness, which when these daughters of Jerusalem, these monarchs, princes, and nations saw they praised and admired her, saying," &c. We observe in the second place that the number of sixty for the queens, and eighty for the wives of second rank, employed in this passage, is entirely taken at random, as that of "Give a portion to seven, and even to eight," and like our Lord's answer to Peter, "I say not unto thee until seven times, but until seventy times seven." It is equally evident that the passages do not refer to any particular individual having had sixty queens and eighty secondary wives, as the "virgins without number" plainly show, that as far as the figure is concerned it was not and could not have been intended to apply to any individual king among men. But as the Church, the Bride, is the daughter of Zion, and the

Beloved is the King of kings, so must the figures correspond, and by queens, concubines, and virgins, must be understood nations, and peoples, and tribes, all of whom belong unto the Lord, but His Church alone is His Bride, His companion, His chosen inheritance, His only beloved in time and eternity. Besides the figure, there is nothing new in the sense; for Moses said: "Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto Himself above all nations that are upon the earth."* Again, "And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be His peculiar people as He hath promised thee, . . . and to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour," &c.†‡ And does our passage contain any other sentiment beyond the repeated assurance by the Lord Himself of what Moses promised to Israel in His name, that among all the nations and families of the earth, His people, His Church, His Bride should be the only chosen one, His dear inheritance, His beloved possession, whom

* Dent. xiv. 2.

† Deut. xxvi. 18, 19.

‡ We cannot help quoting here another passage, which we are sorry to see so sadly disfigured in the common versions: "Jehovah came from Sinai, and he shined unto them from Seir: He appeared from Mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints, from His right hand *came* a fiery law unto them. He also loveth the nations, all his saints are in thy hand, and they shall sit down at thy feet (the posture of the ancient disciples, sitting in a half circle before their Master), he shall be exalted through thy words" (Deut. xxxiii. 2, 3). After having shortly described (in verse 2) the divine glory and splendour which filled the regions of the wilderness when Jehovah appeared in His celestial magnificence to give the law to His chosen people Israel, Moses tells us that Jehovah loved also the other nations, that notwithstanding that they were then excluded from the covenant and privileges, all their saints (*i.e.*, that are to become such in future) were "in His hands," (*i.e.*, in His sure possession); for they also are destined to "sit once down at the feet" of Him who was to be "the ensign to the peoples, the light to enlighten the nations that were to search after Him." Hence they also would then be exalted to the rank of children by Jehovah's Word. They that were aliens and strangers until "the Word was made flesh, and came into the world," were to be "sanctified through the truth," "Thy word is truth." It is probable that translators were led astray by the changes from the plural to the singular which occur in this passage. But while this is of frequent occurrence in Hebrew poetry, they should have been arrested at the word עַמִּים (Amim) "nations," in the plural (which Moses never did, nor could apply to Israel), and see that this was a prophesy regarding the future conversion of the Gentile nations.

He would exalt above all other nations, in praise, in name, and in honour? With regard to the expression, "She is the only one of her mother, the choice one of her that bare her," it has been already remarked, in chap. iii. 4, 11, that in Scripture language Jerusalem and Zion are variously styled the mother of the ancient Church in a metaphorical sense, the spiritual meaning of which is, that it is the Holy Spirit who regenerates and sanctifies the children of God, and prepares them for their Saviour, and God, and eternal life. As a Bride is prepared to meet her Bridegroom, so He adorns them with all spiritual gifts and graces.

"The daughters saw her and praised her, the queens and concubines, and they admired her." This was sufficiently illustrated by the passages we quoted from Daniel and other prophets towards the end of the previous, and at the beginning of the present chapter, to show what a salutary impression the behaviour and testimonies of the captive Bride made on the kings and people at Babylon at different times. But as the substance of these praises and expressions of admiration are recorded by the Lord Himself in verse 10—which is evidently the repetition of the words by which these astonished daughters of Jerusalem expressed their admiration at the Bride's faith and steadfastness, exalted privileges, and glorious destiny, saying, "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning (or morning-star), fair as the moon, bright as the sun, and terrible as bannered hosts?"—we must therefore quote Scripture again for the illustration of both verses at once. As the expression, "The daughters saw her," cannot be *confined* to these daughters of Jerusalem who saw and admired the daughter of Zion at Babylon (though this is the chief point aimed at, because it was the greatest demonstration, and the nearest in point of time), but must also have reference to other occasions at which the Gentile nations saw the daughter of Zion in relation to her God, and praised and admired her, this obliges us to wander over the verdant field of sacred history to pluck some flourishing and perfumed lilies and roses, and strew them over the delightful passage before us. The first object that meets our view is the famous oracle of the heathen prophet, whose eyes the Lord had opened for a while, not as an honour, but as a mortification to the vile mercenary himself, and to those who hired him,

in order to shew him the future destiny of the nation he was invited to curse, and in order that he should proclaim to the Gentile nations, that the "only one" whom the Lord has chosen as His Bride, "looked forth (through the veil of ages), as the morning star, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, and terrible as bannered hosts." "For from the top of the rocks (*i.e.*, from a great distance) I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, this people shall dwell alone, and shall not be numbered among the nations. . . . Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his. . . . He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel: the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them; . . . according to this time, it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, what hath God wrought? Behold, this people shall rise up as a great lion, . . . he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain. . . . How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign-aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters. . . . His seed shall be in many waters, his King shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted."* Here we have the first instance of the "daughters having seen and praised her," and of their exclaiming in astonishment, "Who is she that looketh forth (or shineth forth out of the future covering clouds), like the morning star, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, and terrible as bannered hosts!" Rahab of Jericho said to the spies: "I know that the Lord hath given you the land; your terror hath also fallen upon us, and all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you; for we have heard how the Lord dried up the waters of the red sea for you. . . . And as soon as we have heard these things, our hearts did melt, . . . for the Lord your God is the God in heaven above, and on earth beneath."† The queen of Shebah, who was attracted by the report which reached her distant land about "the name of the Lord," the God of Israel, and about the wisdom of their illustrious and magnificent King Solomon, was convinced that "not the half" was told her of

* Num. xxiii. 9, 10, 21—24, xxiv. 5—7. † Jer. ii. 9—11.

what she now saw with her own eyes, and in admiration exclaimed, "Blessed be the Lord thy God who delighted in thee to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee King, to do judgment and justice."* But though it is said regarding Solomon: "And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all the kings of the earth who have heard of his wisdom;" and though his neighbour, King Hiram, rejoiced in him and said: "Blessed be the Lord this day, who hath given unto David a wise son over this great people;"† we doubt much if all his wisdom, splendour, and wealth, produced such an impression upon the Gentile nations, or diffused such a wide knowledge of Israel's God, or elicited so much praise and admiration for the Bride, His Church, as did her own conduct, testimonies, and public confessions during her captivity at Babylon! Never did the Church of God "look forth" more gloriously, more triumphantly, more like the morning star, or the sun in his brilliant vigour, than she did out of the fiery furnace at Babylon, when the overwhelmed Nebuchadnezzar exclaimed, "Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God!"‡ These victorious witnesses were called by the King "servants of the living God," in addition to their proper names, when he ordered them to come forth from the crucible of their trial. They were carefully examined by "the princes, governors, captains, and the king's counsellors," who saw with surprise that the raging flames had no power over their bodies, or even over the hair of their heads. The whole event, with the astonishing edict which that heathen king published on the occasion among all the nations and tongues of his vast empire, we may safely say is the best and clearest explanation that can be given of the two verses in our Song, "The daughters saw her and praised her; the queens and concubines (kings, princes, governors, captains, and different nations), and they admired her, saying, Who is she that looketh forth as the morning star—fair as the moon, bright as the sun, and terrible as bannere' hosts!"

Thinking it needless to refer again to events and passages

* 1 Kings x. 9.

† 1 Kings iv. 34, v. 7.

‡ Dan. iii. 25.

already cited on another occasion, from Daniel, Ezra, &c., to show how the Most High God was made known to the daughters of Jerusalem, through the testimonies of the Bride, and how these Gentile nations and their kings, princes, and governors, "saw her and praised her," we shall now close these remarks with a quotation from the marvellous history of the Book of Esther, to show how the Lord's captive Bride, after having been delivered from sudden extermination by the miraculous intervention of her invisible Beloved, as suddenly "looked forth bright as the sun, and terrible as bannered hosts." "And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple: and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad. The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour. And in every province, and in every city whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast, and a good day. And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them."* Again, "And all the rulers of the provinces, and the lieutenants, and the deputies, and officers of the king, helped the Jews; because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them. For Mordecai was great in the king's house, and his fame went out throughout all the provinces: for this man Mordecai waxed greater and greater."† This speaks for itself.

THE LORD (Continues).

11. I came down into the pruned (or shorn) garden,
 To behold the tender shoots of the valley;‡
 To see whether the vine flourisheth—
 Whether the pomegranates bud.

* Esther viii. 15—17.

† Esther ix. 3, 4.

‡ גִּנַּת אֵגוֹז (Ginath Egoz, or, as the second word may read, "Aguz") means, "a pruned, or shorn garden" (so Parkhurst rightly rendered it, see Lexicon under גִּז). Throughout Scripture we never find the word "Egoz" signify "nuts." This would, if such were its meaning here, be the only one, and then we would be obliged to derive it from the Persic گوز "guz," as it cannot be of Hebrew origin. The Jews

THE CHURCH.

12. I have not known myself;*
 Therefore Thou hast made me
 Like the chariots of Aminadab.

At the beginning of this chapter, the daughters of Jerusalem asked the Bride, "Whither is thy Beloved gone . . . that we may seek Him with thee?" To which the Bride replied, "My Beloved hath gone down into His garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies." This was explained as referring first to the kings of Persia, who, after they had learned from the Bride's confessions the omnipotence, and superiority of her absent Beloved, asked her where and in what manner they could aid her in seeking and finding Him? To which she answered that, according to His promises by the prophets, the time of His absence (the seventy years, during which He said, "I will go and return to my place," &c.), had fully expired, and consequently He must now have come down again to Jerusalem, His garden, to His plantations and beds of spices, to feed again His chosen flock in the gardens of Zion and Moriah, and to gather His lilies, the praises, prayers, fruits of righteousness, and souls of his saints, and therefore He must now wait for her return to Jerusalem, where she would seek and find him. By the aid of the generous daughters of Jerusalem, the captive Bride returned and built an altar in the midst of ruins, and offered daily sacrifices, and in prayer and supplication, faith and hope, waited for the manifestation of her Beloved. The precious and patiently awaited hour arrived; the messenger of the Lord, the prophet Haggai, came and announced, "I am with you, saith the Lord . . . fear ye not. . . .

have the word, but from Babylon, not from the Scriptures. "A garden of nuts" has neither propriety nor taste, nor the scope on its side, in this passage. The forced and clumsy comments upon this phrase prove it to be a stranger in this fictitious "garden of nuts." אִבַּי (Ibeh, or Ibai) means "tender shoots" or "sprouts," &c. (See Job^b viii. 12, and read, "while it is yet a tender sprout.")

* לֹא יָדַעְתִּי נַפְשִׁי (Lo yadati naphshi) "I have not known myself;" so Job ix. 21, "I know not myself;" so Deut. xxi. 14, "send her," or, "let her go to herself," *i.e.*, whithersoever she likes.

Be ye strong . . . build the house, and I will take pleasure in it, and will be glorified, saith the Lord." This manifestation and oracle we compared with the address of the Beloved to His Bride, contained in this chapter of the Song, and found it to correspond perfectly, and in many points astonishingly so. At the same time we observed the melancholy sides of both these oracles. We saw that the images employed by the Lord in praise of His Bride in this chapter, differ in many points from those employed in chap. iv., owing to the great changes that had taken place in the circumstances of that Church now in ruined Judea, from what they were in the days of Solomon. Being now stripped of her most precious ornaments, having now no Ark of the Covenant, no tables of the law, no mercy-seat, no Cherubim, no Urim of Thummim (though she imitated a sort of breast-plate), and no heaven-descended fire upon her altar, many of them required to be changed, modified, or entirely left out. We also remarked how those things were re-echoed in the oracle of the prophet Haggai in the fact that though she was encouraged to build up her empty temple, He did not promise to *dwell in it* again, for His Throne, the Ark and Cherubim, were no longer there. We likewise observed that His promise to fill that house with glory, was one for the future, when He was to enter it as the Covenant Angel, as Messiah manifested in the flesh, but in regard to the time being, He only promised them that His Spirit would remain among them.*

* Four months later than the first manifestation of the Lord by Haggai, there followed another by the prophet Zechariah, and which spoke to the same purpose, "I am returned to Jerusalem with mercy; my house shall be built in it, saith the Lord of Hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth over Jerusalem" (*i.e.*, round about her, for the rebuilding of her walls, Zechariah i. 16.) Here we see no promise that the Lord would dwell in that house; but another oracle followed, "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion; for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee;" but this is again the announcement of His advent, of His appearing in the flesh and dwelling in the midst of fallen humanity, as the following clearly proves, "And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and they shall be my people, and I will dwell in the midst of thee" (ii. 10, 11.) From the expression "in that day, *i.e.*, in the Messianic day or period, and from the repetition that He would dwell in the midst of His Church after that many nations shall have joined Him and her, we see clearly that for the time being His manifestations to Haggai and Zechariah were only as a passing visit, as it were, done through His Spirit of prophecy in order to encourage His returned captive Church to keep up the ancient dispensation and institutions of the law until His coming in the flesh.

Hence, after having praised His Bride for her faithfulness, constancy, and excellent behaviour at Babylon, which had elicited the praise and admiration of the daughters of Jerusalem, He tells her the object of His present visit, saying, "I came down into the pruned (or shorn) garden, to behold the tender shoots of the valley—to see whether the vine flourisheth—whether the pomegranates bud." Clear and explicit language! It is no more, "the mountain of myrrh, the hill of frankincense," where He once established His abode permanently, and was pleased "to dwell in the midst of thick clouds." It is no more the "enclosed garden" with the "sealed fountain," of which He said, "Thy tender plants are an orchard of pomegranates with delightful fruit, cypress, and spikenard,—spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all kinds of frankincense trees; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices."* No, alas! Now it was a ruined, overturned, and hedgeless garden, destroyed by a fearful winter of seventy years. Tempests and storms, floods of cold rain and showers of hailstone have rooted out, broken, and destroyed the tender and most precious aromatic plants—Ark, Tables of the Law, Mercy-Seat, Cherubim, Urim and Thummim, sacred fire from heaven, all, all have disappeared during the tempestuous blasts of destruction, fire, sword, and captivity. The garden is garden still; it is to be preserved as such by its great Lord and proprietor, but all is now to be done anew. Pruned of all its branches, and shorn of its verdure, the Lord of the garden comes now in the season of spring to inspect it—"to behold the tender shoots of the valley"—the newly-returned captives from Babel's plains—to see if the pruned vine, the humbled and reduced Church has begun to flourish anew, and if the pomegranates, the Priests and Levites, the Governors and Prophets, have again begun to bud and to promise fruit.

This was what the Lord announced to His Church in the 11th verse, to which the humbled, repenting, and broken-hearted Bride replied in the 12th, "I have not known myself," *i.e.*, "Alas, in the days of my spiritual and temporal prosperity, I did forget myself, and neglected to watch over the talents deposited with me; I knew not how to value as

* Chap. iv. 13, 14.

I ought the precious privileges, the blessings, the honour and glory which Thou hast graciously bestowed on me :” “Therefore hast thou made me like unto the chariots of Aminadab.” From this expression it is evident that there must have been once an Aminadab, whose chariots contained and carried for a time the Ark of God, but which were afterwards bereaved of that holy treasure, and remained empty as was now her inner sanctuary. Now in our humble opinion this Aminadab is no other than the Levite Abinadab of Gebah near Kirjath-jearim, in whose house the Ark of the Lord was harboured from the time that the punished Philistines had sent it back to the time when David translated it to Zion. In our explanation of chap. iii. verse 9, especially in our large note at that place, it was remarked that the place where the Ark stood was called “Merkavah,” or “Chariot,” and so we are told that David before his death gave to Solomon the pattern of the temple and of all the holy vessels, and also “Tavnith ha Merkavah,” “the pattern of the Chariot,” *i.e.*, of the Most Holy Place where the Ark was to stand.* Such a sort of chariot in a separate and closed room, with a base on which to place the Ark, Abinadab must have had in his house, for to look on the Ark was certain death. But he made also another chariot on which he placed the Ark when David came to take it to Zion. This Abinadab did in opposition to an explicit law of God which commanded that the Ark should be carried on the shoulders of the Levites, and not touched except by the handles or staves which were introduced into golden rings made for the purpose, and never removed, even in Solomon’s temple. This inexplicable neglect Abinadab atoned for with the life of his son Uzzah, who added error to error in having stretched forth his hand and touched the Ark of God. David, who was at first terrified by this accident, soon found out the reason of it, and therefore he abandoned Aminadab’s chariots, and ordered the Ark to be carried on the shoulders of the Levites appointed for the purpose, and sanctified for the occasion, and thus brought it safely to Zion amidst great rejoicings and shouts of exultation. It is more than probable that “the chariots of Abinadab” became henceforth a

* 2 Chron. xxviii. 18.

proverb in Israel, and in a double sense, first for one suddenly bereaved of an high privilege, enjoyed for a long time, as was Abinadab and his house, and the holy place (called Chariot) where the Ark stood while there; and second, for one who commits a great error, and breaks the law in the very midst of religious zeal, as Abinadab did, who built a new and splendid chariot for the solemn occasion of the translation of the Ark of God to Zion, and acted contrary to the law of God, in placing the Ark upon it, as his son did also in touching it, in consequence of which his son died, and his chariot was rejected as soon as the error was discovered. The reader will now easily perceive what the poor bereaved Bride meant in saying, "I have not known myself, therefore hast Thou made me like the chariots of Aminadab;" *i.e.*, "It is because of my sins and iniquities, because I knew not how to behave when I possessed these precious treasures, and because I was found unworthy to be any longer the depository of such holy relics, that I am now left like Abinadab's chariots, without an Ark, without Mercy-seat and Cherubim. I am now building another house, a temple to my Beloved, but there being no Ark or Cherubim in the inner sanctuary, He will not dwell therein, and my temple will be as empty as were Abinadab's chariots."

But these "chariots of Aminadab" have been the subject of so much conjecture, suggestion, and speculation among commentators, that our explanation needs to be more minutely and fully established. As this cannot be effectually done without entering into the Levitical law in regard to the Ark and most Holy Place, and without touching on the Levitical divisions and orders, and their settlement in the Holy Land, we shall treat this subject in a separate note at the end of this chapter, so that while some of our readers may find it tedious, and leave it out without fear of loosing the thread of the explanation, others may read it, and find it interesting. And here we have only to add that, in justice to our holy Song, and to the Hebrew division of its chapters (by whomsoever these divisions were made) we must restore the last verse which forms the 13th in the English version to the next chapter, to which it certainly belongs, as will be seen. Here therefore we conclude the 6th chapter.

NOTE ON THE ARK, THE LEVITES, AND THE CHARIOTS OF
AMINADAB.

Levi, the third son of Jacob, had three sons, Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. The second of these (Kohath) begat Amram and Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel; and Amram, the eldest son of Kohath, begat Aaron and Moses, the former the first high-priest, the latter the legislator of Israel. (Exod. vi. 16—20.) After the Lord had given to Moses the pattern and description of the holy Ark of the tabernacle and its sacred utensils, as recorded in Exod. from chap. xxv. to xxvii. inclusive, He charged him with the call of Aaron and his sons for the priesthood (chap. xxviii.), and then continued to describe to him the pontifical robes of Aaron, the priestly garments of his sons, their services in the sanctuary, the sacrifices, and their particular laws, &c. The Tabernacle, with all its holy vessels, was finished, erected, dedicated, and Aaron and his sons consecrated and employed at the altar on these solemnities, but the call of the Levites had not yet taken place. It was only a month later, at the general numeration of Israel, that the Lord told Moses not to number the Levites among the other tribes: "But thou shalt appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of testimony, and over all the vessels thereof, and over all the things that belong to it: they shall bear the tabernacle, and all the vessels thereof; and they shall minister unto it; and they shall encamp round about it," &c. (Num. i. 49, 50, &c.) Again, "Bring near the tribe of Levi, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister unto him, . . . and they shall keep all the instruments of the tabernacle, . . . and do the service of the tabernacle. And thou shalt give the Levites unto Aaron, and to his sons; they are wholly given unto him out of the children of Israel," &c. (Num. iii. 5—10). The rest of this chapter is entirely occupied with the separate enumeration of the tribe of Levi according to its chief branches and families.

But the chief branches of the Levites, of Gershon, of Kohath, and of Merari were not all equal in dignity. While the first and the last had only the charge of the outer sanctuary, of the walls, bases, covers and vessels of the large

tabernacle, the middle branch of Kohath, consisting of four chief families, Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel, numbering in all 8600, and ranged under their prince or chief Elizaphan, son of Uzziel, occupied the most prominent position: "And their charge shall be the Ark, and the tables, and the candlestick, and the vessels of the sanctuary, wherewith they minister, and the hanging (the veil), and all the service thereof. And Eleazar the son of Aaron (who belonged to the same family of Kohath by Amram his son) shall be chief over the chiefs of the Levites, and have the oversight of them that keep the charge of the sanctuary" (chap. iii. 31, 32). This pre-eminence of the branch Kohath was farther displayed when the Lord ordered them to be numbered apart from their brethren, and said, "This shall be the service of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation, even the most holy things. And when the camp setteth forward, Aaron shall come, and his sons, and they shall take down the covering veil, and cover the Ark of Testimony with it. . . . (Here follows a minute description of the manner in which the holy vessels and the altars were to be covered.) . . . And when Aaron and his sons have finished the covering of all the sanctuary and its holy vessels, as the camp is to set forward, after that the sons of Kohath shall come to bear it, but they shall not touch the holy (the Ark, which they were to take by the staves only, nor could the priests touch it in any other way, see Num. xviii. 1—7) lest they die."* Owing to the great danger to which this holy charge exposed the Kohath family by the least neglect or error, the Lord said farther to Moses and Aaron, "Cut ye not off the tribe of the families of the Kohathites from among the Levites: But thus do unto them that they may live and not die, when they approach unto the most holy things: Aaron and his sons shall go in, and appoint every one of them to his service, and to his burden. But they shall not go in to look when the holy (the Ark) is covered, lest they die."† When at the dedication of the tabernacle the twelve princes of the tribes presented it with "six covered waggons, and twelve oxen," to draw them, two of these waggons were given to the Gershon branch, and four to that of Merari, "But unto the sons of Kohath

* Num. iv. 4, 15.

† Num. iv. 18—20.

he gave none ; because the service of the sanctuary belonging unto them was to be carried on their shoulders.* We see then that neither the Ark nor any other of the holy vessels in charge of the branch Kohath was to be touched otherwise than at the projecting staves, nor put on a waggon, but carried on their shoulders.

Having thus established the pre-eminence of the Kohath branch and their distinguished privileges, not only because it included Aaron the High Priest and his descendants, as well as Moses and his descendants, but because of their being attached to the service of the inner sanctuary along with the priests, we remark farther in the first place, that whenever we meet with the simple name of "Kohathites," it *includes the priests, the sons of Aaron*, who belonged to that family ; and in the second place, that whenever we meet with the double appellation of *Hachohanim Halvijim*, "The priests, the Levites," meaning the priestly Levites, or the Levitical priests, the entire Kohath family is intended, unless this is followed by the definition of the "sons of Aaron." This fact will clear up to the critical student of the Old Testament many difficulties, and seeming confusion of names, families, and persons. Thus when Israel removed for the first time with the tabernacle from Sinai to Paran, and when we read, "And the Kohathites set forward, bearing the sanctuary" (Num. x. 21), this included Aaron and his sons, as belonging to the same family, and as being attached to the same service, following and watching over the holy burdens which their brethren carried. In Deut. xxxi. 9, we read, "And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests, the sons of Levi, who bare the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord ;" here we see clearly the Kohathite Levites were called "priests," or "priestly Levites" (as it is certain that they and not the sons of Aaron bare the Ark), because they partook with the priests of the charge of the inner sanctuary and its most holy vessels ; while the simple Levites of the other two branches of Gershon and Merari had only the charge of the boards, coverings, bars, pillars, bases, &c., of the tabernacle, but could not even approach to the holy things of the inner sanctuary which were in charge of the Kohathites (see Num. iii.) Hence we read again in Deut. xxxi. 25, 26, "And Moses

* Num. vii 9.

commanded the Levites who bare the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, saying, Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God." Here we see that the "Levites" of this passage are the same as the "priests" in the former, and that the Kohathite Levites were styled "priests" even by Moses. In the book of Joshua those Levites of the Kohath branch bare regularly the name of priests; "When ye see the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests the Levites (or the priestly Levites) bearing it." (Jos. iii. 3.) In the following passages they are regularly called "priests." (Jos. iii. 6, 8, 13, 14, 15, 17; iv. 3, 9, 16, 17, 18; vi. 6, 12, &c., &c.) Such was the honour, and such were the privileges of the Kohath Levites, and they alone could enter the tabernacle, and afterwards the temple, and approach the altar to aid their brethren, the priests, on great occasions, to prepare the sacrifices, &c. (See 2 Chron. xxix. 34, xxxv. 10, 11, 14). And here it is time to remark that Aminadab or Abinadab of Gebah near Kirjah-jearim, or as it is likewise called "Baalath of Judeah," in whose house the Ark stood a long time; and also Obed-Edom, in whose house it stood three months, were both chiefs of the Levites of the Kohath branch, otherwise they could neither harbour, nor approach, nor bear the Ark, as will be seen next.

When Joshua divided the conquered country among the twelve tribes of Israel, he gave "none inheritance" to the tribe of Levi (Jos. xiii. 14); but there were given unto them towns and villages to dwell in, and these were selected by lot out of the territories of the twelve tribes; "And the lot came out for the families of the Kohathites: and the children of Aaron, the priest of the Levites, had by lot out of the tribes of Judah, . . . and Simeon, . . . and Benjamin, thirteen cities. And the rest of the children of Kohath had by lot out of the tribe of Ephraim, . . . of Dan, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, ten cities." (Jos. xxi. 1—5.) The rest of this chapter is occupied with a description of the names of the cities and villages given to the Kohathites, as well as those given to the other two divisions of Gershon and Merari. Remark, 1st, The Kohath branch, including the sons of Aaron, had the first lot because of their dignity and pre-eminence. (See Jos. xxi. 10.) 2d, Though this chief Levitical branch was divided into

two sections, they were both placed in two most important and central localities, the first in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, the other in that of Shiloh, where the tabernacle then stood. 3d, Though the first division passed under the name of the sons of Aaron, the greatest number in that division was composed of the priestly Levites of the Kohath branch; otherwise what would the then mere handful of priests of Aaron's line have done with thirteen cities? or what would all the other families of the Kohath branch, which, at least, were *eight times* as numerous as the descendants of Aaron, have done with only ten cities? It is evident, therefore, that the first division, though it passed under the name "the sons of Aaron," was composed of priests and priestly Levites of the Kohath branch; and this becomes still clearer when we compare Jos. xxi. 4, 8—19, with 1 Chron. vi. 38—45. 4th, That many priests of Aaron's line have also been comprised in the second division, dwelling in the territories of Ephraim, Dan, and Manasseh, as they were needed there for the services of the tabernacle which was then at Shiloh. So Eli the high-priest and his sons and many other priests were settled there and in the immediate neighbourhood, so we read, "And Eleazar the son of Aaron died, and they buried him in the hill that pertained to Phinehas his son, which was given him in Mount Ephraim." (Jos. xxiv. 33.) Here we have two high-priests who lived in the land of Ephraim; and wherever the Kohathites lived they were composed of priests and Levites together. (See 1 Sam. vi. 14, 15, and 1 Chron. xiii. 2, &c.) 5th, That the Levites, thus scattered among all Israel, adopted the names of the respective tribes among whom they were settled. So the young Levite of Bethlehem in Judea is called "a Levite of Judah's family." (Judg. xvii. 7). And so is Elkanah the father of the prophet Samuel called an "Ephrathite," or "Ephraimite," because he belonged to the second Kohathite division which had settled in the territories of Ephraim. (See 1 Sam. i. 1; compare 1 Chron. vi. 33—38.) It was because Samuel belonged to that priestly branch of Levites, that he was wholly given unto the Lord as a Nazarite, and adopted by Eli as such, and trained in the Lord's sanctuary from his earliest youth, that he could offer sacrifices like a priest,

(see 1 Sam. vii. 9, xiii. 8—12, xvi. 2—5), while his sons entered again the rank of the Levites of their order.

The Ark of God having vindicated its dignity and forced its captors to send it back with presents, could not have been taken down from the carriage in which it arrived at Beth-Shemesh, unless by Levites of the Kohath family; and such were the inhabitants of that place, for Beth-Shemesh was one of the cities given to the first division of Kohath. (See Jos. xxi. 16.) So we read, "And the Levites took down the Ark of the Lord and the coffer that was with it, wherein the jewels of gold were, and put them on the great stone; and the men of Beth-Shemesh offered burnt-offerings, and sacrificed sacrifices the same day unto the Lord." (Sam. vi. 15.) But the men of Beth-Shemesh having despised the warning of the law, "looked into the Ark," and paid dear for their imprudence and irreverence, and were so terrified that they sent to Kirjath-jearim and begged the inhabitants to come and take away the Ark from their city. Here another confusion must be cleared up. Kirjath-jearim, some times called Baalah of Judah, and also Kirjath-Baal (Jos. xv. 60; 2 Sam. vi. 2), was a large city of the tribe of Judah. Close to it was a small place or village called Gebah or Gabah, which belonged to the tribe of Benjamin, whose territory bordered there on that of Judah. (Jos. xviii. 14.) Thus Gebah (which must not be confounded with the famous "Gibeah of Benjamin," which was near Jerusalem), fell by lot to the first Kohathite division. (Jos. xxi. 17.) It was in that place that Abinadab the Levite chief dwelt, "And the men of Kirjah-jearim came, and fetched up the Ark of the Lord, and brought it into the house of Abinadab in Gebah (mark that what in the common version is here rendered "in the hill," is in 2 Sam. vi. 3 rendered "Gibah" or "Gibeah," for they knew not what to make of it), and they sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the Ark of the Lord." (1 Sam. vi. 1). Probably it is because the inhabitants of Kirjath-jearim joined their neighbours the Levites and priests of Gebah in the translation of the Ark, because the large city Kirjath-jearim was nearer to Gebah than any town of the tribe of Benjamin, to whom Gebah once belonged, and because there were several other places of the same name (Gebah, Gibah, Gabah, &c.)

in the same region, that the small place and its inhabitants borrowed the well-known name of the large provincial city, as we do in the address of a letter to a small village near London, Liverpool, Edinburgh, or Glasgow, and put it before its own. This Abinadab was a prince or chief among the Levites, see 1 Chron. xv. 10, where he is called *Aminadab*, of the family branch of Uzziel the fourth son of Kohath, and it was owing to his high station that the death of his son Uzzah was considered such a public calamity. (1 Chron. xiii. 11, xiv. 13.) As there is no mention made of his eldest son Eleazar (see 1 Sam. vi. 1) at the translation of the Ark by David, it is evident that he must have died during his dangerous charge, and it was now Uzzah, Aminadab's second son, who would have succeeded his father and older brother in their dignity.

The errors committed by both father and son, the first by his misapplied zeal in building a new chariot for the solemn occasion of the translation of the Ark to Zion, while as a Levite he should have known that the Ark must be borne on the shoulders, and not put on a carriage; and the second in forgetting himself so far as to touch it in the presence of the ten thousands of Israel; we say that both these errors are inexplicable, and fearfully were they punished. Terrified at the awful judgment which overtook that Levite chief, David would proceed no farther, nor take such a responsibility on himself. In the neighbourhood of the accident lived another chief of the same Kohath branch of Levites, called "Obed-edom the Gittite," and into his house they placed the Ark. Probably he originally belonged to the second Kohath division, two of whose cities, in Ephraim and Manasseh, were called Gath-Rimon (Jos. xxi. 23—25), in one of these Gaths he must have been first settled, and then changed his residence and fixed it among his brethren in Judea. In his house it remained only three months, and proved a great blessing to himself and his family. David then saw that if the laws of God regarding the Ark were strictly observed, its presence would prove a great blessing instead of a great danger. Having called the chiefs of the priests and Levites, David told them to sanctify themselves and their brethren, and this time carry the Ark on their shoulders, according to the law of God. This was done, and the Ark was brought safely to Zion amidst great joy

and shouts of triumph, where it remained until placed in Solomon's temple to be removed and seen no more. In the Levitical service, which David then arranged before the Ark on Mount Zion, Obed-edom, and Achio, Abinadab's third son (called "Jeiel," 1 Chron. xv. 18, and "Jechiah," in verse 24), were made the chiefs of the principal division of door-keepers to the Ark. At the second arrangement which David made before his death, and intended for the future temple service, Obed-edom remained in his former charge, while Achio (called there "Achiah") was made "overseer of the treasures of the house of God" (see 1 Chron. xxvi. 20.) They also both figured among the secondary chief musicians (xvi. 5, xv. 16—22.) Having thus traced our personage in regard to tribe, place, family, station, and identity, we shall only remark that the slight changes in proper names are very numerous in Scripture; especially the letter α is sometimes left out, and "Shalem" put for "Meshulem" (as 1 Chron. vi. 12); "Abija" for "Abijam" (iii. 10.) Sometimes the "Mem" is changed into "Nun," as "Kimhom" into "Kimhon," "Joyakim" into "Joyachin," "Hezrom" into "Hezron." Sometimes the "Mem" is changed into "Beth," as "Amiel" into "Abiel," "Amihud" into "Abihud." As Jesse called his second son Abinadab after his progenitor Aminadab, who was the first prince of the tribe of Judah, so here we see the Abinadab, whose uncalled for, unfortunate, and *rejected chariot* became a proverb in Israel for misplaced zeal, called Aminadab.

CHAPTER VII.

ARGUMENT OF CHAPTER VII.

(V. 1.) The daughters of Jerusalem, or the Gentile nations, invite the daughter of Zion to return into the midst of them, no more as a captive mourning the absence of her Beloved, but as a Missionary Church, bringing unto them the good tidings of salvation, and inviting them to come to the Messiah, the common Saviour of Jew and Gentile. (Vv. 2—6.) The daughters of Jerusalem, or the awakened Gentile nations, describe in the highest metaphorical language the spiritual

beauty and splendour of the *Shulamite* (the restored ancient Church), when, according to many prophecies, she would come in the midst of them as an ambassador of salvation, as a messenger of peace, inviting them to come and join themselves to her Lord in an everlasting covenant under the gospel dispensation. (Vv. 7—10) The daughters of Jerusalem sum up the perfection, glory, and privileges of the daughter of Zion, the ancient restored Church, and beg her that even before the New Covenant Dispensation she would make some concessions to them with regard to the rigour of the law, take them into communion with her and her God, and allow them to enjoy some privileges in His sanctuary. (V. 11.) The ancient Church declares that she had neither power to make any concessions to Gentiles, nor to admit them into the Church before the Messianic period; up to which she must remain the only nation and only Church. But (vv. 12—14) she addresses an ardent prayer to her Beloved that He might hasten His appearance, and remove the partition wall of the law and open wide the doors of His sanctuary in order to admit these Gentiles knocking and praying for admission and communion.

THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM (FIRST DIVISION.)

1. Return, return, O thou restored one (or “accomplished one”),*

Return, return, that we may look on thee.

SECOND DIVISION.

What will ye see in that restored (or accomplished) one?

FIRST DIVISION ANSWERS—

As it were the evolution of the two armies.†

* *הַשְּׁלֻמִית* (Hashulamith.) The two prevailing suggestions about the signification of this articulated Noun are, 1st, that it means “Jerusalemite,” which is as absurd as ungrounded; 2d, that it is equal with “Solomonite,” which must be rejected as another speculative absurdity of the same stamp. Separate from the article *הַ* *Ha*, *שְׁלֻמִית* (Shulamith), or, as we may read it with many of Dr Kennicott’s Codices without *vav*, and point it either *שְׁלֻמִית* (Shalemith), or *שִׁלְמִית* (Shilamith), we must derive it either from *שָׁלַם* (Shalem), perfect, accomplished, complete,” &c., as 1 Kings viii. 61, vii. 51; Is. xlii. 19; Deut. xxv. 15; Job viii. 6, &c.; or from *שִׁלַם* (Shilem or Shilam) signifying, “to restore, repay, recompense, reward, re-establish, rehabilitate,” &c. According to the first derivation “Ha Shulamith” will signify the “perfect, or accomplished woman” (or Church). According to the second it will signify either, “the recompensed woman” (or Church), *i.e.*, she who suffered much for her sins, but who has entered again into the favour of her Beloved (see Is. xl. 1, 2; Jer. l. 20); or the restored woman (or Church) *i.e.*, restored after the Babylonish captivity to her liberty and privileges. We have given both these meanings in the text, not only for the sake of choice, but because both may have been intended by the sacred author.

+ *כִּמְחֹלַת הַמַּחְנַיִם* (Kimcholath, hamachnayim.) The first of these words can be derived only from *מָחֹל* (Machol) signifying a “circular

In the preceding chapter we had a description of the manifestation of the Lord to His restored Church after the Babylonish captivity, and saw how in recommending her faithfulness in the land of her dispersion, the Bridegroom said, "The daughters saw her and praised her, the queens and concubines, and they admired her." This prediction by Solomon we found fully accomplished during the sojourn of the captive Bride at Babylon, where, by her excellent behaviour and public confessions, by her constancy in the midst of all her afflictions, by her unchangeable faith even in the midst of the flames of a furnace heated seven-fold, and among roaring lions, she not only elicited praise and glory for her divine Master, but also great admiration and sympathy for herself; so much so that the "daughters of Jerusalem" (or the Gentile nations), moved to compassion, repeatedly offered to her generous aid, to enable her to seek her Beloved at Jerusalem. We saw likewise how she returned to her desolate country by their support, built an altar to her still absent Lord, offered daily sacrifices to His holy name, and invoked by prayer His promised return. The Lord first manifested Himself by the prophet Haggai, and then by Zechariah, comforted and consoled her, and encouraged her to rebuild His temple, to raise again the broken walls of Jerusalem, to re-establish the interrupted worship according to the law, and to wait for His coming into His temple as Messiah, in order to complete and wind

dance," well-known and common to the orientals even unto this day on feasts and other solemn occasions. This dance was performed by several companies at once, and by ranks. The ancient idolaters formed it round about their idols, around which the musicians stood and played but moved not, while the several circles of dancers moved on round about in their fantastical evolutions, but every rank in an opposite direction, forming thus wheel within wheel, while these wheels turned the one to the right the other to the left, &c. If this dance was performed by several different companies it resembled much the evolutions and busy turnings of two armies, each of which were trying to gain ground and supplant the other. Such circular ranks the daughters of Israel formed round Miriam the prophetess, and joined with her in praising and adoring God for their deliverance (Exod. xv. 20, 21.) Such, alas, was the circular dance of fallen Israel round the golden calf (xxxii. 19.) Afterward, on a better occasion, when the daughters of Zion went forth to meet the disappointed Saul, and the young hero David after his victory over the Philistine giant (1 Sam. xviii. 6, 7, see also Judges xxi. 19, 21.) What a horrid "*play*" that of 2 Sam. ii. 14! Still it must have been a real *play* of wrestlers, like the Roman gladiators, resembling the circular dance.

up the Old Covenant, and introduce the New, in which the "daughters of Jerusalem" should be included. Meanwhile the restored Church, thus encouraged, was busy day and night re-building the temple, but raising the walls of her ruined city, and the daughters of Jerusalem remained without ! and with every new course of stones laid and cemented in the temple and in walls of the city, the old "partition wall" between Jew and Gentile equally rose and grew higher and stronger. At last the doors of the temple were put in their place, and the gates of the holy city shut with iron bars, and the vails of the sanctuary again hung up, but the daughters of Jerusalem remained without ! Then they saw themselves again strangers and aliens from the God of Zion, His favourite Church and temple, and His Covenant of blessings and privileges. They saw that they had gained no substantial advantage in having aided the Bride to seek her Beloved ; for as soon as she had found Him, high walls and thick vails encircled and covered, as it were, the great God and His Church, while they remained excluded, and were just where they were before they had known the Bride and had learned from her the greatness, holiness, omnipotence, and divine majesty of her Lord and Redeemer. Now they perceived that it was not enough to see the Bride and admire her, to confess her Beloved to be the God of gods and King of kings, and to aid her to seek Him exclusively for herself, for they received no advantage whatever to themselves. Hence the vehement exclamation of those "prisoners of hope," of those half awakened, half believing, half admiring, half confessing, and half seeking daughters of Jerusalem, "Return, return, O thou Shulamite !" *i.e.*, "return, O thou restored Church ! return, O thou accomplished Bride ! return unto us now, no more as a captive woman mourning the absence of her Beloved, but as a restored, comforted, and re-established Church with thy God with thee, and in the midst of thee, and then we shall look at thee, we shall see thee when enjoying the favour of thy Beloved, we shall behold thee when in full communion with thy God."

As these very daughters of Jerusalem in the days of their complete ignorance about the greatness and divine majesty of the God of Zion, asked the mourning Bride, "What is thy Beloved more than another beloved?" so it now happened to them in turn. While they ardently desired the return

of the restored Bride into the midst of them that they might again behold her, and learn and gain by her example, such of these awakened Gentiles as were not yet far advanced in knowledge or desire, asked their sisters, "What will ye see in the Shulamite?" *i.e.*, "What will ye see in the now restored Church, that you have not seen while she was your captive? Why such a longing after her now when she is again in favour with her Beloved, while you have aided her to go in search of Him?" To which the more advanced daughters of Jerusalem answered, "We desire now that she should come back into the midst of us in her restored state, and in favour and complete communion with her Beloved, that we may see as it were "the evolution of the two armies" (or hosts)—the promised happy period when her Beloved in the midst of her shall appear as the "ensign to the nations," as the "light to enlighten the Gentiles"—when the partition wall shall be demolished, the covering veil torn and removed, and when the two hitherto hostile and divided armies shall by one happy evolution, by one change of the old into the new covenant, be united into one, ranged under the same gospel banner, as two divisions of an army belonging to the same sovereign, which have been separated for a time by the rebellion of one of them, but which on its repentance and the announcement of the King's free pardon among its ranks, make a cheerful evolution and unite again under the same banners "when the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, . . . and all the nations shall flow unto it; and many nations shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his path, for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Is. ii. 2, 3)—when "The son of the stranger that hath joined himself to the Lord shall no more say, The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people," but when the promise will be fulfilled, "Also the sons of the strangers that join themselves to the Lord to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord to be his servants, every one that keepeth the Sabbath from profaning it, and taketh hold of my covenant. Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and fill them with joy in my house of prayer; their

burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar, for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations."*

A later oracle the daughters of Jerusalem received by the prophet Zechariah, and which must have greatly encouraged them and stimulated them to pray more ardently for the speedy removal of the partition wall which separated them from the covenant blessings and hope of Israel." Thus says the Lord of Hosts, It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people (Gentile nations) and the inhabitants of many cities, . . . saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of Hosts. . . . Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of Hosts. . . . In those days it shall come to pass that ten men, out of the languages of all nations, shall take hold of the skirts of him that is a Jew, saying, "We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you."† This chapter thus opens with a metaphorical view into the fulfilment of the above oracles, though they were delivered long after Solomon had composed his Song; but the substance of the above prophecies had already been announced by Moses,‡ and still more clearly and more frequently by his father David. Thus when the daughters of Jerusalem heard that the Lord had returned to His Church from whom they learned both their knowledge of Him and His promises regarding them, they invite her to come again to them, to teach them His ways, and to lead them also to her Beloved; for according to these oracles, she alone was destined to lead them and introduce them to the King as her companions ("virgins in rich attire shall she lead to the King"), and to lead them "with joy and exultation into His palaces" (Ps. xlv. 14, 15, see our new version of the Psalms.) They therefore continue in the following verses to describe the beauty of the daughter of Zion, when as a Missionary Church she would put shoes on her feet, gird her loins, and go forth to invite and instruct the Gentiles, and introduce them to her King and Lord in an everlasting covenant.

* Is. lvi. 3—7.

† Zech. viii. 20—23.

‡ Gen. xii. 3, xviii. 18, xxii. 18, xlix. 10; Num. xv. 21; Deut. xxxii. 21, xxxiii. 3.

2. How beautiful are thy feet (or "footsteps") with shoes,
 O thou benevolent daughter!
 The projections (or protuberances) of thy thigh-bones
 Are like moulded ornaments,
 The handiwork of a skilful workman.*

* בַּת נָדִיב (Bath Nadiv) "Benevolent," or "generous daughter," or "daughter of benevolence, or generosity." נָדָב (Nadav) means "liberal," "free," in offering or giving to the Lord's cause, as Exod. xxv. 2, xxxv. 5, 25, &c. נְדִיב־לֵב (Nediv lev) "generous of heart," "free hearted," "liberal in heart," as v. 29. Hence נְדָוָה (Nedavah) "free gift," which occurs very often in Scripture. If *Nadiv*, and in the plur. *Nedivim*, is sometimes rendered by "prince," and "princes," it is quite arbitrary; for it means nothing but a generous, liberal, or benevolent man or men. However, as the princes and chiefs of Israel in David's times, and very often before and after that period, were really so generous and liberal towards God's cause, and to their fellow-men, that they merited to be called *Sarim* (סָרִיסִים) "princes," and *Nedivim*, "generous" or "liberal men" at the same time, we have no objection to make *Sarim* of *Nedivim*. But we proclaim the title given to the Bride in the above passage as infinitely higher in value than all the principalities of this world. The "Daughter of Benevolence," of generosity or charity, the Missionary Church of Christ, is so called here because of her love to souls, of her disinterestedness and zeal in seeking their salvation and eternal welfare; but more in the Exposition.

חָמָק (Chamak). From the construction of this verb, and from the contexts of the three places where it occurs, it seems to denote a removal, a withdrawal or a projection (a coming forth) caused either by moral or physical pressure or force. In this Song, chap. v. 6 (or 7), it denotes the forced withdrawal or removal of the Bridegroom, because of the refusal of the Bride to open unto Him. In Jer. xxxi. 22 it denotes the repeated removal or withdrawal of the same Bride, the daughter of Zion, from her God, because of the moral pressure of her calamities, and doubts, and fears, which forced her as it were to come forth out of joint, and appear as a backslider. In this verse, חָמָקֵי יָרֵכָי (Chamukey Yerechayich) means the "projections or protuberances of the thigh-bones," coming forth by the pressure of the girdle with which the Bride as a Missionary Church is here described as having girded her loins, in order to go forth with her blessed message to call the Gentiles and lead them to her Beloved. These projecting thigh-bones or haunches, thus pressed forward by the tightness of the girdle, are described by the daughters of Jerusalem to look like חָלָוִים (Chaloim), which must be derived from חָלַל (Cholel), "to model, to fashion or shape," especially as in a form. See Ps. xc. 2, applied to the creation of the world; Deut. xxxii 18, applied to Israel in a poetical form, as fashioned by God to be His peculiar people; Prov. viii. 22, 25, figuratively to Wisdom, as formed or fashioned. Hence it is applied to individ. man, as Job xv. 7; Ps. li. 7, &c. We may thus conclude that *Chaloim* signifies modelled or moulded ornaments, fashioned in a certain form; and from the fact that it appears here twice coupled with

3. Thy girdle is like a round bason,
Which wanteth not the clasp;
Thy body is like an heap of wheat,
Surrounded with lilies.*

“ear-rings” (Pro. xxv. 12; Hos. ii. 13), it must have been a head ornament. And such sorts of high projecting hats made of silver and gold, and curiously worked, and always fashioned in a certain form, are still to be seen here (in Algeria) on the heads of the old rich Moorish and Jewish ladies, on great occasions, as marriages, &c., and in their houses or in bridal processions, which take place at night, for at other times the Europeans seem to frighten them from the streets by their gazing and scorn. These are of different shapes and dimensions, some higher and thinner, some lower and broader, but all of them do well illustrate the meaning of the comparison of our passage. See Exposition.

* שָׂרֵיךְ (Sharerech) cannot mean “thy navel” (as it was erroneously rendered), for then it would certainly have been with only one ר (resh), שָׂרֵךְ (Sharech), as Ezekiel xvi. 4, “In the day when thou wast born, לֹא כָרַת שָׂרֵיךְ (lo charath sharech) thy navel-string was not cut.” In the same form it appears in Pro. iii. 8, not with two as in our text, but one ר only. But while שָׂר (Shar) alone is a Noun, and signifies “navel-string,” שָׂרַר (Sharer) is a verb, and means “to string, to wind, to twist,” as strings, cords, chains, or “to wind round.” Hence it is so often used in the Psalms in a noun form שָׂרָרַי (Shorerai), “Those that encircle me, enclose me, entwine me, are round about me to watch and catch me” (Ps. xxvii. 11, liv. 5, lvi. 2, lix. 10, &c.) Hence it is said of the Behemoth, “His strength is in his loins, and his force is בְּשִׂרְרֵי בִטְנוֹ (Bishrerei bitno) in the girdles (or strings) of his body,” i. e., the circular muscles of his body (Job xl. 16). אֲגַן הַסָּהָר (Agan hasahar) means “a bason of a round or circular form.” For *Agan*, “a bason,” see Exod. xxiv. 6; Is. xxii. 24, &c., &c.; and that *Sahar* signifies “round” is conjectured from the word סָהָר (Sohar) “prison” (Gen. xxxix. 20, &c.), and because those prisons were round built; but it is more likely that both *Sahar* and *Sohar* mean “a round enclosure,” a round building, place, or vessel made to be locked up.

מִזֶּג (Mazeg) was most absurdly confounded with מִסֶּחַ (Mesech), “mixture,” or “mixed wine,” as Lexicographers suggested, and translators and commentators took for granted; for there is no more identity between them than between the English words *music* and *muscle*. *Mazeg* is derived from זָג (zug), which, as a noun, means “a pair,” or “two joined things,” and, as a verb, “to join, to pair, to unite, to bind together,” &c. These significations the word has in the Arabic, Syriac, and Chaldee languages, and is largely employed by the Talmudists, &c. To it belongs זָג (zag), in Num. vi. 4, meaning the outer skin or husk of the grape, because it unites the juice and kernels into one. In the passage before us, *Mazeg* means “the clasp,” or “lock” (literally the uniter, the pairer), by means of which the girdle was joined in the front, as well as those “clasps or locks” by which the basons were joined either to their cover, if they were single basons, or when they

4. Thy two breasts are like two young fawns,
The twins of the roe.
5. Thy neck is as a tower of ivory ;
Thine eyes like the fish pools in Heshbon.
By the gate of Bath Rabim ;
Thy countenance is as the tower of Lebanon,
Which looketh towards Damascus.
6. Thy head upon thee is like Carmel,
And the tresses of thy head like royal purple,
Suspended on (or, attached to) the rafters.*

It was already remarked that the five verses before us contain a beautiful and enthusiastic description of the ancient Church becoming a missionary, putting shoes on her feet, girding her loins, and going forth from Judea to invite the daughters of Jerusalem, and lead them to her King and Bridegroom in order to incorporate them in the same body, the Church, and to range them under the same banners of Christ the Lord. We must therefore understand the contents of these five verses, as put into the mouth of the daughters of Jerusalem, in admiration of the Bride coming to them as a missionary, and as uttered by them *in anticipation* of that happy event, which, according to many prophecies, some of which we quoted above, they understood not to be afar off. Hence, after having most ardently invited the Shulamite, or the restored Church, to return to them in the capacity of a missionary—for the purpose of bringing about the happy union of the two camps, of Jew and Gentile, hitherto separated by the impassable barrier of the law, those “prisoners of hope,” or awakened Gentiles, begin to describe the surpassing beauty and splendour of the daughter of Zion, when she would come to them as an ambassador laden with the fulness of the New Covenant blessings promised to the nations of the earth through the “Seed of Abraham,” the “Ensign,” the “Emanuel,” the Saviour of the world.

were basons composed of two half globes of equal size joined together on one side by means of hinges, and shut on the other side by clasps or locks. Such joined basons seem to have been those of the temple out of which the blood of the sacrifices was sprinkled ; but see more in Exposition.

* See Note in the Exposition of this verse.

“How beautiful are thy feet (or footsteps) with shoes, O thou benevolent daughter!” *i.e.*, “If thou hast been so beautiful, so attractive and so lovely when thou wast among us a poor barefooted captive, desolate, broken-hearted, and sorely lamenting the absence of thy Beloved—if even when thou hadst no mission, no order to invite us to come and join ourselves to thy God, thou hast by thy confessions, walk, and conversation, imparted to us such a knowledge of thy divine Master, and excited in us such sympathy with, and admiration for thee that we exclaimed, “Who is she that looketh forth like the morning-star, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, and terrible as bannered hosts!”—O, what will it then be when we shall see thee from afar walking majestically over the mountains, as the Missionary Zion, bringing good tidings to the Gentiles, as the Bride of the Lamb, who in her benevolence, zeal, and love for souls, shall put on the pilgrim’s sandals to traverse the wilderness of this world, and carry to the nation and families dwelling in the shadow of death, the torch of celestial light, the gospel of peace, the tidings of salvation and eternal joy!

“The projections of thy thigh-bones are like moulded ornaments, the handiwork of a skilful workman.” In those days, when there were no postal or telegraphic communications, and every message had to be performed by men on foot, who had often to cross trackless mountains and deep and rugged ravines impracticable for animals, the messenger to a distant country had to put on his sandals, and gird well his loins for the journey. As he advanced, fatigue and privation produced leanness, and as his body became thinner every day, his girdle had to be tightened, and the depression thus caused made his thigh-bones become more and more projected, showing how great had been the distance and the fatigue of the journey. These projected thigh-bones of the messenger of salvation are praised and admired by the joyous and thankful daughters of Jerusalem, and compared to moulded and skilfully wrought gold ornaments for the head; as these signs indicated at once the fatigue of the journey, and his zeal, activity, devotion, and persevering courage in conveying the message to her. “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, . . . that

publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth."* But the New Covenant Zion thus saved, sanctified, and inspired, was to become the bearer of the good tidings in her turn; "O Zion, bearer of good tidings, get thee up into (or upon) an high mountain, . . . lift up thy voice with strength, . . . say unto the cities of Judah, Behold, your God."† "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel unto every creature," was the parting order of Zion's Lord and Saviour, but telling her at the same time to "begin at Jerusalem," to proclaim first to the cities of Judah, "Behold, your God." So she did, she began at Jerusalem; and when she was strengthened, encouraged, and multiplied at the fountain-head, she flowed forth and spread rapidly in every direction, like the overflowing of a mighty river, to water the desert places of this world, and turn them into gardens of God. She shod her feet and girded herself,‡ and set out courageously for her laborious but important journey; and in the language of one of her illustrious sons, she shod her feet "with the preparation of the gospel of peace, girt her loins about with truth, and put on the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God."§

Thus prepared, she went forth to accomplish her Master's orders, to invite the virgins of the patiently waiting daughters of Jerusalem to come and join themselves in an everlasting covenant to her own Bridegroom, her Lord and Saviour; and all she offered "without money and without price," for her Master told her, "freely ye have received, freely give." Her message, therefore, was as much of נְדָבָה (Nedavah) "free-will offering" or "liberal gift," as was the salvation of the "sure mercies of David" which the Covenant Angel brought to herself. Therefore in anticipation of that time and event, the daughters of Jerusalem call her נְדָבָה בַּת (Bath Nadiv), "Benevolent, or generous daughter" (or daughter of benevolence, or generosity), who offers herself freely and with a willing heart to spend and be spent in the service and for the glory of her Lord, and for the eternal happiness of souls. They admire her disinterestedness, self-denial, fatigue, and exposure to all manner of

* Is. lii. 7. † Is. xl. 9. ‡ See Acts xv. 18. § Eph. vi. 13—17.

sufferings and privations on their behalf, and compare her depressed loins and protuberating thigh bones to curiously wrought ornaments. And as an illustration of this figure, we may take the following passage in one of David's plaintive Psalms, which, if literally rendered, reads thus: "Thou hast brought us into straits (*i.e.*, into great sufferings and privations), Thou hast put a shrivelling into our loins,"* *i.e.*, a deepening caused by the decrease of flesh from fatigue, want, privation, and continual care, in consequence of which the girdle descends deeper and deeper, and the thigh bones, as well as the ribs and shoulders, protrude and project more and more. But we must constantly keep in mind that it is the spiritual substance which these images represent that is admired; it is the good tidings brought by that generous messenger that are so highly praised, though under a metaphorical dress. The shell may be beautiful, and well adapted for the protection and preservation of the fruit, but it is the fruit alone that possesses the real value. It is the good tidings of salvation and joy, which the messenger carries across craggy mountains, that makes her sandled feet, fatigued appearance, and projecting bones, so precious in the eyes of the poor perishing sinner. The shattered ship carrying provisions to a famished garrison is admired, praised, and blessed, yea, and kissed on her arrival by the withered lips of the half-starved multitude, though it is the provision which she brings that delivers them from starvation.

"Thy girdle is like a round bason, which wanteth not the clasp." The reader will easily understand that it is the shape of the girdle when round the body that is here described as looking like a round bason with its clasp in the middle. It was into such basons that the blood of sacrifices was received life-hot, and out of which it was sprinkled by the priest upon the altar and before the vail, or (when it was carried within) upon the mercy-seat; upon Israel, when the covenant was ratified at the foot of Mount Sinai; and on certain occasions upon the persons who brought sacrifices for their purification. Thus we read Exod. xxiv. 6—8 that Moses took the half of the blood of the covenant sacrifices into basons, out of which he sprinkled it upon Israel, saying,

* Ps. lxvi. 11. See our translation and exposition of the Psalms on that passage.

“Behold, the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words.” Such were the basons prepared for the altar in the tabernacle,* and where they are called מִזְרָקוֹת (Mizrakoth), “basons for sprinkling.” Solomon made an additional number of such gold and silver basons for the temple;† and such basons were among the vessels carried away to Babylon and restored by Cyrus.‡ Now it was in the girdle that the messenger in olden times carried the despatches or letters containing tidings. Hence the image is exceedingly beautiful. Zion, the bearer of good tidings in the front of her girdle, had to announce to the Gentile nations salvation and peace by faith in the blood of sprinkling, “that speaketh better things than that of Abel.” The gospel of truth, which she carried in her girdle with clasps in the front, was therefore compared by the daughters of Jerusalem to the round basons of the temple which contained the typical blood of sprinkling. The prophet said regarding the redeemed and saved children of the New Testament Zion, “The Lord of Hosts shall be a shield unto them . . . and they shall be filled like the basons, like the corners of the altar.”§ The blood of sacrifices was usually divided into two parts, the one half was poured into the bason-like cavities near the horns of the altar, and the other was taken into the round basons above described for the purpose of sprinkling. The promise, therefore, of this prophecy, that the saved children of Zion would be filled like those basons, can only mean that they would carry, as it were, salvation, reconciliation, hope, and peace in themselves by faith in the Saviour’s blood, once represented by the blood in the bason carried by the priest. And such are some of the corresponding expressions of Paul. “Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.”|| “For I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.”¶ “What, know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost who is in you?”**

“Thy body is like an heap of wheat, surrounded with lilies.” The Israelites used to thrash their wheat, and

* See Exod. xxxviii. 3; also, Lev. ix. 12, 18.

† 1 Chron. xxviii. 17.

‡ Ezra i. 10, viii. 27.

§ Zech. ix. 15.

|| 2 Cor. iv. 10.

¶ Gal. vi. 17.

** 1 Cor. vi. 19.

winnow it as soon as it was cut, but never to store it up in stacks with the straw as we do. They divided the grain into ten equal heaps, larger or smaller according to the size of the field and crop, one of which was set apart as the tithe for the Levites. The heap set apart for the Levites was surrounded and ornamented with flowers and lilies, until it was brought to Jerusalem, if not too far from it, where it was laid up again before the temple, and again ornamented with fresh lilies, and thus presented to the servants of the sanctuary when both donor and receiver repeated a certain prayer.* It is to those adorned and consecrated heaps of wheat belonging to the house of God that the New Testament Church is here compared; and why? because she carries about the precious seed of the Gospel to sow it in distant countries, and among hitherto barren and benighted nations; because she breaks the bread of life to sinners, and leads them to Christ, who is the "real bread that came down from heaven," and feeds the awakened and hungry souls with the sure mercies of David, with the wine and milk of the gospel, without money and without price; and because in herself she was like an heap of celestial wheat, prepared by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, from which the Lord now and then carried off handfuls, which He spread among the nations, the daughters of Jerusalem, where churches thus planted and watered by the Lord often grew up from single grains, and were the means of gathering rich crops into His garner.†

"Thy two breasts are like two young fawns, the twins of the roe." This figure was already explained at large in chap. iv. 5, in its twofold signification, first, as referring there to the Ark and Cherubim in Solomon's temple, and second, in its spiritual signification as referring to the Church nourishing her young ones with the knowledge, love, and fear of God, feeding her lambs with the milk of heaven's wisdom. It has also been remarked that the absence of this figure in chap. vi. was owing to the fact that at the period to which that chapter belongs, the newly returned captive Church had neither Ark nor Cherubim in her sanctuary, nor food (breasts) to feed others with, being

* Deut. xiv. 22—27, xxv. 12—15; 2 Chron. xxxi. 4—12; Mal. iii. 10.

† See Acts viii. 4, 12, 36—40, ix. 15, 42, xiv. 21—28.

so poor and weak that she needed to be fed with milk herself; and as the time of shadows and types had not yet come to an end, this figure could not then be applied to her spiritually, or to her temple figuratively. But our present passage refers to the New Testament Church and times, when type and shadow were to be superseded by bright spiritual realities, when the Church of God was to "shine because her light had come," and to be in her turn a "light to enlighten the Gentiles," though she only reflects the light of her head, as the moon does that of the sun—a missionary to preach the gospel to every creature, a tutor to instruct the simple and ignorant, and a nurse to feed and watch and lead the lambs of her Master's flock. More, therefore, than ever before could this image be again applied to her, and hence we shall meet with it once more towards the end of the Song, where the Bride applies it to herself. The King's Bride, the Church of God, had two breasts richly supplied with the food of heaven; with the one she feeds and nourishes her own children born within the bond of the covenant, while the other she offers to starving strangers and aliens who perish for lack of knowledge, "that they may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations, . . . and be delighted with the brightness of her glory."* These breasts are as like each other as the "twins of the roe." The food she gives the one, coming as it does from the same source, is the same that she tenders to the other, the same gospel, the same Saviour, the same doctrine, the same faith, the same hope, the same heaven, the same glory. In chap. iv. 5, the fawns were spoken of as "feeding among the lilies," which was explained as referring to the Cherubim which were hid from the eye like these young roes among the bushes and lilies, and only seen in pattern embroidered on the curtain which covered them, just as these lovely creatures, concealed among the lilies and foliage, now and then allowed their heads to be seen by putting them out at some opening, and soon disappearing again. And so indeed was the ancient Church concealed spiritually within the partition wall, and seldom appeared to the eye of those without. This additional image could not be employed here, for the New Covenant Church has neither concealed Ark nor Cherubim, nor is concealed herself. There

* Is. lxvi. 11.

is no more mystery about her ; what she has heard in secret she publishes on the house tops, her light is put on a high place to spread afar, and that every one seeing her should recognize her and testify that she has been with Jesus and is His.

“Thy neck is as a tower of ivory.” In the fourth chapter this figure was employed by the Bridegroom, but there the neck of the Bride was compared to the tower of David, “built for an armoury, whereon hang thousand shields, all the bucklers of the mighty men.” There it was advanced that its primary reference may be to the high tower of the porch on Solomon’s temple (see exposition of that passage), and hence it was remarked on chap. vi., that the entire absence of that figure in it must be owing to the fact that there was no such tower built on the second temple, to which period it refers. But in this passage it is no more the Bridegroom describing the beauty and perfections of His ancient Church under the old dispensation with temple, altar, and sacrifices ; but it is now the daughters of Jerusalem describing the beauty and comeliness of the daughter of Zion as a Missionary Church, carrying the good tidings of salvation and joy to distant nations and tribes across deserts and mountains of difficulties, through dangers, privations, oppositions, and sufferings. Having begun to praise the footsteps of the generous messenger, her movements, and proceedings, and having metaphorically described the whole body under the figures already considered, the daughters of Jerusalem now compare her neck to a tower of ivory. Has such a magnificent and famous tower overlaid, or plated with ivory, ever existed ? and if so, where ? or was it a mere comparative figure for a tower composed of polished stones, whose lustre dazzled the eyes of the beholder from a great distance ?* These are matters of no interest to us, and of no importance to our subject. One thing is clear, that the image is intended to represent the conspicuousness, stateliness, lustre, firmness, and vigour of the ambassadors of the Church of God, who never stoops nor lets her head sink unless before her Lord and Master,

* See Josephus’ description of the temple rebuilt by Herod, and of its cloisters constructed of enormous white polished stones, which, owing to their elevation and whiteness, were seen at a great distance, and were marvellous to look at. Jos. antiq. Book xv., chap. xi.

her spiritual head. Before man she stands upright and firm, like a strong and stately tower—no matter where, when, or before whom, whether at Jerusalem or Babylon, Samaria or Rome, before the wicked kings of Judah or Israel, or before Nebuchadnezzar or Nero, in prison, in the fiery furnace, in the lion's den, before Papal inquisitions, amidst perils of fire and water. In all circumstances, that neck remained firm and majestically erect, never bowing to idols, but only to the holy will and order of her Lord.

“Thine eyes are like the fish-pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-Rabim.” Heshbon, the ancient capital of the Amorite King Sihon, seems to have been a most famous city for situation and beauty. In the days of Moses, the Israelites took it along with the whole kingdom of the Amorites,* and it remained in the possession of the two and a half tribes beyond Jordan. It became afterwards the bone of contention between the Moabites and Israelites; for originally it belonged to Moab, from whom Sihon took it in war.† In the days of the Judges, Moab seems to have taken it from Israel, who were made tributaries, and were sorely oppressed by them during eighteen years. But when the oppressor ventured to cross the Jordan and take Jericho, the Lord raised up a deliverer to Israel in Ehud the Benjamite, who slew Eglon the king of Moab, and destroyed his army, and Israel beyond Jordan remained again in possession of Heshbon and its territory. This also appears from the message of Jephthah to the pretenders the Amonites, who paid dearly for their false claims.‡ From the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah regarding Moab, it appears evident that either at the captivity of the two tribes and a half tribe, or even at some former period, the Moabites became again masters of Heshbon and its territories, and that it was in a most flourishing state when the prophets foretold its final ruin.§

The two artificial lakes or pools|| seem to have been situated within the most populous gate of Heshbon, called

* Num. xxi. 21—31.

† See Num. 26—30.

‡ See Judges xi., especially ver. 26.

§ See Is. xv. xvi.; Jer. xlviii.

|| בְּרֵיכָה, *Berecha*, “pool,” or “artificial lake,” never implies that it contained *fish* or not. It is only because the *fish* put in by the translators do not interfere with the figure or substance, that we have left them in the text.

Bath-Rabim, or the daughter of the multitude, *i.e.*, the gate of the thronged thoroughfare, one on the right and one on the left of that entrance to the city, and to have constituted the first striking and attractive object of admiration to the thronging crowds entering that beautiful city, as the text implies. To these charming waterpools, surrounded and lined with a verdant edging of flowers and lilies, the daughters of Jerusalem compare the lovely and attractive eyes of the Missionary daughter of Zion, when bringing the good tidings of salvation to them. These pools of Heshbon were doubtless the surest guides for the multitude of strangers on entering the gate of Bath-Rabim to know how to direct themselves in visiting the thoroughfares of the most intricate streets and lanes of the vast city. A sure guide in a trackless desert is called *eyes* in Scripture. Moses said to Hobab, "Leave us not, I pray thee, for as much as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, thou wilt be unto us instead of eyes (or "eyes unto us.")*" Job said, "I was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame."† Such eyes is the Church of God to the spiritually blind, to those that dwell in the shadow of death, and to those that have to traverse the great, terrible, and trackless wilderness of this world, whom she leads to the "Fountain of light, in whose light they see light." Having her own eyes enlightened by Jehovah's pure commandments, counsels, and statutes, she so instructs the pilgrims under her tuition, that even in the midst of the intricate labyrinth of this desert they can perceive the land that is afar off, and see the king in his beauty.

The beautiful pools in Heshbon were never liable to sudden overflowings, nor the country around exposed to inundation and devastation by them in the rainy season, for they were provided with canals and sluices which carried off the superfluous waters as soon as they collected. The modest and pious Bride of the Lamb is never puffed up by prosperity, for she has made a "covenant with her eyes" never to be lifted up by pride, nor to overstep the limits which humility, purity, and decency prescribe to her, an example which she has from her glorious head in the days of His humiliation on earth. She is always ready to say with the humble David, "Lord, my heart is not haughty nor mine eyes lofty, neither

* Num. x 31.

† Job xxix. 15.

have I cherished great plans (or 'exalted, extravagant, hopes'), nor wonderful things above my stage" (or "reach.")*

The pools of Heshbon were never troubled by sand or any impurities carried into them by the streams of rain water; for the sluices admitted only the pure waters. The eyes of the Bride are never troubled nor made dim by any impurities, or by bribery, of which it is said: "Bribery doth blind the eyes of the wise, and perverteth the words (or cause) of the just."† But she can say, "Here I am, witness against me before the Lord . . . whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith?"‡

These pools stood there continually, could never be removed, but looked always towards the gate of Bath-Rabim. The Church of God stands fast continually upon the "Rock of Ages," and cannot be removed thence, even by the very gates of hell, and has always her eyes directed towards Jehovah her God, the Creator of heaven and earth, and towards the gates of His sanctuary, saying, "Mine eyes are ever towards the Lord."§ "But mine eyes are directed unto thee, O God my Lord."|| In seasons of long drought these pools suffered by the continual action of the scorching rays of the sun, and by the want of new supplies, and so lifted up their languishing eyes as it were towards heaven, and implored refreshing and quickening rain. The Church of God, in seasons of spiritual drought and calamities exclaims, "Mine eyes fail (or languish) for thy word (or promise), saying, when wilt thou comfort me?"¶ "Mine eyes fail (or languish) for thy salvation, and for the word of thy righteousness."** Sometimes her eyes are exhausted from shedding many tears, and she says, "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because of them that keep not thy law."†† At other times she deplures not having more tears to shed for perishing sinners, and says, "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughters of my people."‡‡ But she never murmurs against God nor against the mysterious dispensations of His government, but even in times of

* Ps. cxxxi. 1.

† Deut. xi. 17.

‡ 1 Sam. xii. 3.

§ Ps. xxv. 15.

|| Ps. cxli. 8.

¶ Ps. cxix. 82.

** Ps. cxix. 123.

†† Ps. cxix. 136.

‡‡ Jer. ix. 1.

deepest distress, says, "Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters . . . so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God until he have mercy upon us."* "For thy loving kindness is before mine eyes, therefore will I walk in thy truth."†

"Thy face (or figure) is like the tower of Lebanon which looketh towards Damascus." That 𐤀𐤍𐤃 (apech) means here "face, or figure, or countenance," and not "nose," as it is rendered, may be inferred from the fact that this would be the only irregularity in the whole set of figures in this, and in similar passages of this Song; for certainly, the metaphorical person being described here regularly from foot to head, if a "nose" had been intended it would have been introduced before the eyes. But the enormity and unmeaningness of the supposed figure should have been sufficient to shew that the word stands here, as it very frequently does elsewhere, for the whole countenance.‡ The daughters of Jerusalem, who had once already said of the Bride that she was "terrible like bannered hosts," said once more that her whole appearance looked like the "tower of Lebanon which looketh towards Damascus." From 1 Kings ix. 19 it is clear that Solomon had erected many towers and fortresses on Mount Lebanon—since, during his long, prosperous, and peaceful reign, he was disturbed by none of his neighbours, but the Syrians of Damascus under their new King Ben-Hadad,§ we may safely conclude that the fortress and tower which Solomon built on the part of Lebanon looking towards Damascus in order to overawe and keep in check these desperate marauders, must have had the most formidable appearance of all the fortresses and towers of that period. To compare the Church of God to that famous tower, presents a sublime image of her whom the great God has built upon the "precious corner stone laid in Zion," and regarding whom He has said: "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper,"|| "For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish,"¶ and who

* Ps. cxxiii. 2.

† Ps. xxvi. 3.

‡ Who would ever dream of rendering the same word "nose" in passages like Gen. xlii. 6, and read "with their noses," instead of with their faces! In Gen. xlvi. 12; 1 Sam. xxv. 41, xxviii. 14; 2 Sam. xiv. 33, xxiv. 20; 1 Kings i. 23, 31, and in scores of other passages, the word cannot be rendered otherwise than by "countenance, face," &c.

§ 1 Kings xi. 14—25.

|| Is. liv. 17.

¶ Is. lx. 12.

was erected on earth as a mighty fortress and tower to keep in check the prince of darkness and his hosts. To Jeremiah the Lord said: "Behold, I have made thee this day like a fortified city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land, . . . and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee."* The sufferings, persecutions, and calamities which that servant of God had to endure, are exceedingly afflicting, yea heartrending, but is not there something mysteriously wonderful in his courage, perseverance, fearlessness, and firm persistence! That poor weak man could not be killed by the multitudes of remorseless and obstinately wicked and powerful men who sought his ruin, with all their counsels, plans, and snares for his destruction! While Urijah was pursued even to Egypt, and brought bound to Jerusalem and put to death with the sword for having long before spoken to the same purpose with Jeremiah, the latter, whose threatenings were still ringing in his enemies' ears, stood there like an "iron pillar," as if all their swords had broken to pieces when brought into contact with his throat!† He dictated to Baruch the sum of Jehovah's awful verdicts. These Baruch wrote on a roll of parchment, and when they were read in the temple they produced a sensation of terror among all that heard them. The roll was brought to the wicked king, read, and burned, and he ordered Baruch and Jeremiah to be brought before him (and we know for what purpose), "but the Lord hid them."‡ But another roll was soon prepared by the order of God with many additional threatenings and denunciations against the wicked and hardened king, and his blinded people, and openly published, and Jeremiah still alive! Nothing could bring that astonishing man to silence; for the Lord had made him "like a defended city," an iron fortress, to confound and put to shame and trembling the mighty men of this world, and to show them that the weakest of creatures, defended by God, was irresistible, that neither fire, nor water, nor prison, nor sword, nor torture, nor famine, nor all the powers of darkness combined could stop the mouth of a "worm Jacob," when the Lord of Hosts said unto him, "Open thy mouth and speak,"

* Jer. i. 18, 19.

† See Jer. xxvi.

‡ Jer. xxxvi. 26.

and that he will stand firm and impregnable against all the machinations of hell so long as the God of heaven and earth has yet some message to be delivered, or some purpose to be served by him. Was not that man a thousand times mightier and more resistless than the famous "tower of Lebanon which looked towards Damascus?"

The above remarks on the life and actions of one illustrious son of the ancient Church must suffice as an illustration of the figure which compares the New Covenant Church to a strong and imposing tower. And where would we stop, and when would we finish, if we should begin to consider the New Testament Jeremiahs, such as the great and wonderful apostle Paul, whom neither stripes, nor prisons, nor famine, nor chains, nor shipwrecks could intimidate, yea whom even stoning could not kill so long as he had a single message to deliver? Suffice it to say that from Paul to our own day, thousands of renowned sons of the Church of God have proved in all ages and countries that she is an iron fortress, built upon an high rock, against whom all weapons of war and destruction, and all that is called *power* on earth or in hell have been and still are utterly powerless. She is continually besieged, but never taken, and in the very act of fighting against her, her enemies are exhausted, destroyed, and perish miserably. But it is not so with her; for after every new fight, every new bombardment of her walls and towers, every new attack by the armies of Satan, she comes forth more powerful, more formidable, more impregnable than ever, for her Lord said unto her, "They shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee."

"Thy head upon thee is like Carmel, and the tresses of thy head like royal purple, suspended on (or attached to) the rafters."*

* The common rendering of the last line, "The King is held (or bound) in the galleries," has no sense whatever. After all the fancies heaped upon it, *King and galleries* remain entire strangers to text, context, and the sense of the whole chapter. It is therefore more than evident that we must read כֶּסֶף גַּמְוֵן מֶלֶךְ (Ka-argaman-melech), "like royal purple," as פַּתְבַּג הַמֶּלֶךְ (Pathbag-hamelech), "royal provisions," (Dan. i. 5, &c.), מַעֲדַנֵי מֶלֶךְ (Maadanei-melech), "royal dainties," (Gen. xlix. 20), כְּמִשְׁתֵּה הַמֶּלֶךְ (Kemishteh-hamalech), "like a royal feast," (1

Any beautiful table land covered with stately trees, fruitful vineyards, and flourishing fields, and surrounded in the valleys below with rich pastures, was called Carmel in Scripture. (See our remarks on chap. ii. v. 1.) A head plentifully covered with hair was always considered as a mark of beauty in a woman.* “But if a woman have long hair it is a glory to her,” &c.† The Bridegroom twice compared the hair of the Bride to “a flock of goats that feeding descendeth from Mount Gilead,”‡ and which was explained to refer in its primary signification to the happy companies of worshippers ascending and descending Mount Zion, whither they repaired to “feed on the fatness of Jehovah’s house, and to enquire in His temple.” But these primary references to Mount Zion and temple exist no longer in the apostrophe addressed by the daughters of Jerusalem to the Bride, in anticipation of her becoming a Missionary Church, carrying the gospel of peace to the

Sam. xxv. 36), or like הַדְרָת־מֶלֶךְ (Hadrath-melech), “royal glory,” רֵצוֹן־מֶלֶךְ (Retzon-melech), “royal favour,” (Pro. xxviii. 35), and מִקְדָּשׁ־מֶלֶךְ (Mikdash-melech), “royal chapel,” (Amos vii. 13.) These, and many such like compounds which could be cited, show that our *Ka-argaman-melech* belongs to the same family, and means “like royal purple.” But we cannot agree with those who having found out the above sense of the compound, still blunder about the רֵהַטִּים (Rehatim), which they render “trough,” or “gutters,” in the sense which this word has in Gen. xxx. 41; Exod. ii 16, and hence they are obliged to resort to strange and fanciful explanations, by supposing that in ancient times the dyed purple was put in small bundles into running water (see Parkhurst under רֵהַט) But these bundles make a sad figure, and the tresses of our Bride have nothing to do with running water. We therefore take this *Rehatim* to be the same with the רַהֲטָנִי (Rahitenu) of chap. i. 17 of this Song, where it signifies “rafters.” As the royal purple formed in those days one of the most important articles of luxury and magnificence in royal palaces, it is certain that in the apartments where their riches, jewels, treasures, ointments, and spices were disposed, and of which they made such show and pomp on certain occasions (see 1 Kings x.; 2 Kings xx. 13; Esther i. 6; Ezek. xxvii. 7, xvi. 24), there were also special airy chambers in which the unwoven royal purple was suspended in tresses on the rafters, and beams, and nails, as by lying in an heap it would have been spoiled. Such an apartment overhung with the royal purple becomes a rich and splendid image of the tresses of the Bride, hanging down from her Carmel-like head. It is proper to remark also that it is the *beauty, rarity, quality, and softness* of the wool of the royal purple that constitutes the images and not the *colour*.

* Is. iii. 24; Ezek. xvi. 7.

† 1 Cor. xi. 15.

‡ See chap. iv. 1, vi. 5.

Gentile nations. Nor can we, in seeking the spiritual substance of this image, go so far as to the spiritual Head of the Church, who is Christ, the Bridegroom of the Song.

But although the New Testament Church has *officially* no other head, no other chief shepherd, but Jesus Christ her Lord and Redeemer, she has heads, in a figurative sense, in her teachers, pastors, and guides, or elders, in which sense alone such were also called heads in Scripture. "The ancient (elder) and honourable, he is the head."* "Knowest thou that to-day the Lord will take away thy master from thy head?"† Though it was not by *official authority*, but by the bond of love and gratitude for spiritual benefits, and by the position of the one to the other that the sons of the prophets called their teachers masters and heads, still we see from it that the spiritual leaders and teachers were called *heads*. In such a sense are the teachers and elders heads in the Church of Christ, going as they do before the flock to lead them, and teach them, and shew them the way to Zion. These may be compared to Carmel for their freshness and vigour, for the fruits of righteousness which they yield by their faithfulness and zeal, for the beauty and splendour which they cast upon the Church, as Carmel did upon the land to which it belonged, and for the spiritual food which they prepare and administer to the lambs of Christ's flock, as the Carmels produced and tendered abundance of temporal food and delicious fruits unto Judah and Israel.

Moreover we need not go far in search of a spiritual substance to our image, whether with regard to the whole Church collectively, or to every individual Christian separately. By nature every fallen child of Adam is leprous in his soul, and has "his plague in his head," while every renewed and sanctified child of Christ has "the consecration of God on his head," for He makes him a priest and Levite in His sanctuary, and causes him to say, "The Lord is my glory, and the lifter up of my head." By nature every "head is sick, and every heart faint," but regenerated by the Holy Spirit, and made a new creature in Christ, his head is anointed with the balm of Gilead, all his wounds are healed, and a crown of glory and the "helmet of salvation"

* Is. ix. 15.

† 2 Kings ii. 3.

are put upon his head. By nature every head is bald,* bare, dry, and barren, and nothing but the curse of a vindictive law rests upon it; but the moment he is justified by faith in the blood of Christ the blessings of the New Covenant cover his head, "Blessings are upon the head of the just," and "the very hair of his head are numbered by Him who bought him with a great prize"—his forehead receives the seal and mark of the τ *Tav*, signifying "perfect in Christ," (*Tamim*), and holiness unto the Lord; yea, he becomes a temple of Him of whom Daniel and John said, when they were favoured with a glimpse of His glory in a vision, "His head and hair were white like wool."†

Such is the metaphorical description which the Spirit of God showed the daughters of Jerusalem, or awakened Gentiles would make of the Bride, when anticipating her future mission of carrying the light and tidings of salvation to the benighted nations of the earth. Here, we are sure, many a reader will ask, "At what period, and on what occasion were these prophecies of Solomon, with regard to the Gentile nations bestowing such high eulogiums upon the ancient Church in anticipation of her coming to them with the fullness of the Gospel of Messias fulfilled, and when did they express such ardent desires and prayers for the approach of the Messianic period, or invite the Bride with such glowing language as that, 'Return, return, O thou Shulamite,' &c., and then describe her beauty as a messenger unto them?" If such a question be possible at this stage of the Song, a satisfactory answer to it is not only desirable, but most important, and that before we go farther; for the passage immediately following that which has now been explained contains a farther step on the part of the daughters of Jerusalem, even that of eagerly supplicating the Bride to receive them into holy and spiritual communion in anticipation of the Lord's coming, and of His opening the whole door of His sanctuary to them. And how could we proceed any farther, while leaving even the possibility of such a question behind us? We trust therefore that the serious reader will not consider the following remarks as a useless digression, but peruse them with patient attention, and then judge if they are rightly placed here.

* See the sense of this term Is. xv. 2; Ezek. xxix. 18; Amos. viii. 19.

† Dan. vii. 9; Rev. i. 14.

THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM WAITING FOR DELIVERANCE
BY CHRIST.

The sacred and invaluable treasure of the Church of God, *the Bible*, contains many jewels, rubies, and diamonds, inclosed in historical shells, and which we often pass by as things of no intrinsic value to us now, and we are apt to wonder for what purpose the Holy Spirit dictated these historical facts to the inspired men of God. It is only in time of need when we examine them thoroughly that we find out their value; for they enlighten our eyes, and Scripture explains Scripture, mystery solves mystery, and difficulty removes difficulty, as the weight put on one balance lifts that of the other. Often when our sailing vessel is brought to a stand by a perfect calm, prayer and search discover a powerful and swift steamer, hitherto hid between rocks and mountain cliffs, which takes us in tow, drags us adrift, where the "Spirit breathes on us from on high, and our seeming desert becomes a Carmel," and a seeming obscurity becomes a region of light. Such a momentary calm the writer of these lines encountered in chap. vi. 1, 9, 10 of this Song, where the inspired author had put into the mouth of the daughters of Jerusalem words like these, "Whither is thy Beloved gone . . . that we may seek Him with thee?" "Who is she that looketh forth like the morning star, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, and terrible as bannered hosts?" and where the Bridegroom said regarding these Gentiles that they saw His Bride, and praised and admired her. The question then arose, "Can these predictions be proved by historical facts to have been fulfilled at the period to which they must refer?" The reader who has carefully perused the historical researches and quotations from Scripture for the explanation of these passages, will surely agree with the writer that they have been not only most satisfactorily, but most strikingly fulfilled. On entering the present chapter of the Song, and glancing over it, on seeing it open with an ardent invitation on the part of the Gentile nations to the once captive Bride, who, while among them, taught them much of the knowledge of her God, by confession and example—to return unto them as the Shulamite, as the restored and accomplished Church of

the God of Zion, going forward in her capacity of a Missionary Church with shod feet and girded loins to carry heaven's message of salvation and peace to the Gentiles once excluded and dwelling in darkness, and, on considering verses 8—11 of this chapter which contain a decided resolution on the part of the daughters of Jerusalem to join themselves to the Bride, and entreat her to introduce them into the "King's palace," a new calm overtook the vessel, and its pilot started back at the seeming difficulty to prove all this to have been fulfilled before the coming of Christ, during His official ministrations, and immediately after His return to His Father. But on studying the subject seriously, and prayerfully re-opening our sacred treasure for a more perfect search, and chaining together detached links of prophecy and of historical facts, the result was again the same, showing how wonderfully Jehovah sees "the end from the beginning," even as regards thoughts and resolutions of men in a distant future. Yes, these predictions of Solomon were literally and strikingly fulfilled, and for us it is to exclaim with one of old, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

The prophet Haggai, in announcing the coming of Christ, calls Him "The desire of all nations," saying, "And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come," *i.e.*, after having prepared the nations for that great event, by great changes and convulsions, by moral and temporal revolutions, He who is the "desire of all nations" shall come "into His temple, and fill it with His glory, and in this place will I give *Shalom* peace," or, "Him who is peace."* And the prophet Zechariah said regarding the King of Zion, "And He shall speak (announce) peace unto the heathen;" which surely implies that their false peace would first be disturbed, and that the Messiah would bring them true peace. So we see from the above prophecy of Haggai, that even in his days the looked for Messiah could be called the "Desire of the nations," though their knowledge of the only true and living God was yet imperfect, and they were yet "groping in darkness," still it was a fact that they were groping about seeking Him whom they

* Hag. ii. 6—9.

knew not, but desired to know and serve. Every one who has studied the moral history of nations in those days, knows that the great shaking among them had begun from the time of the captivity and dispersion of Israel in their countries—that the dumb idols had begun to stagger as if driven by a tempest, or as if a mine had exploded under them. Nations began to be ashamed of their infantine stupidity, and now and then there burst forth, as if from a mysterious under-current, a loud talk about the great God of heaven.

That wonderful movement was not, indeed, common or general. It did not descend to the lower classes, to the ignorant masses of the heathen nations, but it prevailed among the higher and thinking classes, the philosophers and legislators, who in those times begun to steal as much as possible from the Jewish religion and revelation, to cover over and conceal their own misery, blindness, and foolishness, and to polish up their ancestral superstitions which they had neither courage, nor light, nor a mission to overthrow. The gloomy end of Socrates, the great moral movements in Greece, and the changes introduced into their philosophy before and after that event, are telling facts in regard to what was said above. There was a shaking going on among the nations, there was a certain knowledge and a desire for more, a groping in the dark for light, a longing for reformation, a panting for the great and only living and true, though yet unknown God. They struggled, as it were, with an irresistible enemy, an enemy in themselves, in their want of light, in their innate darkness and prejudices, in the imperfection of their so-called *wisdom*. They struggled amid obstacles both within and without them; for the appointed season had not yet come, and all their efforts were powerless to bring it before the fulness of time. Jesus, and Jesus alone, was the "desire" of those struggling nations though they knew him not.* He alone was appointed to

* Should one ask "How could it be said of these Gentiles that Jesus was their 'desire' if they knew Him not?" we answer with the fearful example of the Jews, of whom the prophet said, "The Lord whom ye seek . . . the angel of the covenant whom ye delight in," and who will deny that they eagerly waited for the Messiah promised by the prophets, seeing that they wait still with the same eagerness? and who will deny that the Messiah was their delight and desire, seeing that in their blindness they delight still in the false idea that He is yet to

deliver them from the darkness in which they staggered about, seeking for light. Before Him alone the heathen idols were to fall to the ground, and before His coming no other could do the work. All thinking men knew that light must come, that the long night of stupid idolatry was far spent, and they eagerly directed their failing eyes towards the East to discover the promised "morning-star." At last the hour struck, and three of these Gentile "watchmen" discovered it, and came to Bethlehem, and saw the "desire of all nations," and adored Him. Though He was then but an helpless babe, the salvation of a world of sinners looked forth out of this innocent body, the precious blood of sprinkling run in His veins, and the fulness of the blessed Godhead sparkled from His eyes. He was to "speak peace" to the heathen nations, and His dominion to be from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.

There is a wonderful passage in the prophet Malachi, disfigured in the common version by *additions* of three *shall be* in italics, which speaks loud in regard to what was advanced above. In rebuking Israel for their lukewarmness in religion, and for slighting the Lord's sanctuary, he says, in the name of God, "For from the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense is offered unto my name and a pure offering; for my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of Hosts."* It is inexplicable how any one should have applied this beautiful passage to the future, by three additional *shall-be's*! Was it the "incense and pure offering," said in the passage to have been offered at that time by the Gentile nations to the God of Israel, which lead to this! But one should have seen that these must be figurative expressions, for honour and glory, power and supremacy, ascribed to Him, even were the passage to refer to the

come? And still when He came "unto His own, his own acknowledged Him not," while those poor struggling nations in question recognised in Him the Messiah for whom they waited, though they knew Him not. "The Gentiles who followed not after righteousness have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, who followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness." (Rom. ix 30, 31.) Again, "Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded," (xi. 7.) See the contexts of these passages.

* Mal. i. 11.

Messianic period; for Christ abolished incense, and “sacrifice, and offering.” But it is evident that the “incense and pure offering” stand here for the public confessions of the Gentile nations at that period, and their testimonies to the omnipotence and supremacy of the God of heaven. And what, we ask, was it that the mighty Nebuchadnezzar, the mortal “king of kings,” did, when “he fell on his face and worshipped Daniel, (or rather the God of Daniel, as shall be seen,) and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him?” That this must have been done to the God of Daniel, is evident, first, from the fact that he opposed not the performance of it; and second, from what we read farther of that king’s confession, “Of a truth it is that your God is the God of gods, and the Lord of kings,” &c.* After the deliverance of the three heroes of faith from the fiery furnace, the same said in the presence of his whole court, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent his angel and delivered his servants that trusted in him.”† The proclamation that he soon sent forth to all the nations and tribes and tongues of his vast dominions that all men should fear and honour the great God of heaven—the awful punishment threatened against any one that should “speak ought” against that God—his astonishing language in another proclamation, “I thought it good to show (publish) the signs and wonders that the High God hath wrought towards me; how great are his signs, and how mighty are his wonders, his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation”‡—is not this sufficient to explain the “incense and pure offering” of the Gentile nations? Is not this enough to show how the Lord could say even at that period, “my name is great among the heathen?”

But we must take into account the fact that from Daniel to the prophet Malachi, two centuries elapsed during which the name of the great God of heaven was more and more made known among the Gentiles; and many transactions recorded in sacred history prove that moral progress among the heathen. King Cyrus openly declared before all nations, “The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms

* Dan. ii. 46, 47. † Dan. iii. 28. ‡ Dan. iv. 2, 3.

of the earth. . . . Who is there among you of all his people, his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, . . . and build the house of the Lord God of Israel," &c. &c. The rich and magnificent presents and offerings which that prince gave to the returning captives and for the temple of God, all the declarations of the succeeding kings of Persia, their public confessions, their letters to their governors, their royal presents in gold, silver, and provisions for the priests and Levites, their orders that all the sacrifices of the temple, and all its provisions, should be procured from the royal treasury, and their repeated requests to the priests that they should offer prayers for them and their families, we say is not all this sufficient to explain the above prophecy of Malachi, delivered at a period when the cold and ungrateful Israelites began to offer on the altar of God, "the sick, and the lame, and the blind?" Could not the Lord then say that already His "name was great among the Gentiles," since by their open and public confessions, and by their ardour to offer the most precious gifts to His temple, they offered far purer oblations and incense than did His own nation?

That this irresistible desire after the knowledge and worship of the great God of heaven, and those struggles in the midst of deep darkness for sparks of light, continued during the obscure period which elapsed from the last prophet Malachi to the time of Christ; and that they grew stronger and stronger notwithstanding the great political convulsions which shook the nations from the days of Alexander to those of Augustus Cæsar, may be gathered from profane history and from the works of historical criticism treating of those ages and transactions. The astonishing behaviour of the great and proud Macedonian conqueror, in adoring the name of Jehovah, which met his eye on the mitre of the high-priest—his answer to the question of a heathen king, why he whom all others adored, should adore the high-priest of the Jews? "I did not adore him, but that God who has honoured him with the high-priesthood"—the sacrifices he offered on the altar of God—the munificent presents he left for the temple and priests, and the great favours he conferred on that occasion on the Jewish nation at large,*

* See *Antiq.* Book xi. chap. viii. p. 1.

shew that the name of the God of Zion was then great among the nations, and that they made progress in the knowledge of Him. The ardent desire of king Ptolemy Philadelphus to have his vast library enriched with a faithful translation of the Book of books, which the great God had deposited with His chosen people—his royal and reverential treatment of the priests and translators of it, and the joy he manifested when he saw it completed and heard it read—the magnificent presents he made to the temple of Jerusalem at that time—and the redemption with a vast treasure of upwards of a hundred thousand Jewish slaves, are striking testimonies to our argument, and an explanation of the passage of Malachi.* The honour which the kings and nations of Asia paid to the Jewish nation—the expressions of Antiochus the Great in his letter to Ptolemy, “In the first place we have determined, on account of their piety towards God, to bestow on them . . . for their sacrifices of animals . . . for wine and oil and frankincense, the value of twenty thousand pieces of silver” (here come the measures of flour, wheat, salt, &c.) “I would also have the work about the temple finished, and the cloisters, and if there be anything else that ought to be rebuilt, . . . in order to render that temple more glorious,” &c., &c.; and the decree which he published throughout his kingdom in honour of God, His temple, and His nation,† are illustrations of the same. The letter of Areus, king of the Lacedemonians, to Onias the high-priest, claiming relationship with Israel for himself and his nation, and a covenant of mutual friendship and aid for the future,‡ cannot have had its origin in anything else, but in the increased knowledge spread abroad of the great God of Zion. The leagues made several times by the Romans with the Jewish nation, the different decrees and proclamations of the Senate, Emperors, and Governors regarding them, and the documents of the same nature regarding their leagues with other nations, speak to the same purpose.§ The refusal of Petronius, Governor of Syria, at the risk of his honour and life, to put in execution the cruel order of the monster Caius, to place his statue in the temple by violence and mas-

* Antiq. Book xii. chap. ii.

† Antiq. Book xii. chap. iii.

‡ Antiq. Book xii. chap. iv.

§ See Book xiv. chap. x.

sacre, many minor events of those times which cannot be cited because of their great number, and even the very behaviour and utterances of Vespasian and Titus before and after the destruction of Jerusalem by their armies, all bear testimony to our argument.

Moreover, the Old and New Testament history reach hands, as it were, to each other, in order to fill up the void of the intervening centuries left without a sacred and inspired historian. In reading Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, &c., one is obliged to conclude that the knowledge of God spread among the heathen nations before and after the restoration of a part of the captive Jews from Babylon to Jerusalem—for many hundreds of thousands remained dispersed in every country and kingdom,—and however superficial that knowledge may have been at first, it must have continued to increase, to augment the ardent desire of thinking men for more light, and to stimulate in them the hope of an approaching manifestation of the great God in favour of the whole human race, when He would by one flash of celestial light disperse the thick darkness accumulated during many ages of superstition and corruption, and childish fables. In reading the Acts of the Apostles, it is impossible for any observing mind not to see that the Gentiles were prepared for centuries before for the gospel times by a generally diffused knowledge of the existence of one great and Almighty Creator and Governor of the whole Universe, and by a gradually growing desire to find Him and adore Him supremely, though the way in which they were to find Him was still to them a mystery.

Before we enter on the search among the Gentiles in the Acts of the Apostles we have to observe that the wise men from the East, and the ignorant woman of Samaria, prove that rich and poor, wise and ignorant, all in their different ways expected and eagerly waited for the coming of the promised Messiah. The wise men of the East,—who certainly were not the only Gentile philosophers waiting for the Messiah at that time, and who may be regarded as the representatives of the educated and thinking class,—calculated by the progress of the human mind, by the general agitation and search for more religious knowledge and light, and by what they heard and read of the prophecies possessed by the Jewish nation regarding the coming of

“Shiloh to whom should be the gathering of the nations,” that the time of His coming could not be far off; and having waited in prayer and supplication for that divine manifestation, God honoured them with the first discovery of Emanuel’s star, and with being the first among the waiting Gentiles to adore the Son of God in the flesh. The circumstance of the poor ignorant Samaritan woman’s saying to the inhabitants of her town, “Is not this the Christ?” and the joyous testimony of the latter, after having seen and spoken with Him, “This is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world,” shews as clearly that the coming of Messiah was not known and expected only by the great and wise, but that it was in those days a fact generally spread everywhere, even among the lowest classes of the people. And this was not confined to the Samaritans, who were a sort of half Jews as to their religious creed, and who lived in the neighbourhood of the Jews, for it is known that at that period the Jews were spread abroad throughout Asia, Africa, and Europe, and that they spread the knowledge of their God and his holy oracles everywhere.

The first thing that meets our eye on glancing over the Acts, is that the “devout strangers of all nations” who dwelt at Jerusalem at the time of the ever-memorable day of Pentecost were composed of “Jews and proselytes”—a fact which confirms the assertions of Jewish writers that during the last century of the second temple many thousands of Gentiles became proselytes to the Jewish religion. This was no doubt the result of the influence of so many Jews dispersed among them, and of their having become tired of the dumb idols. It is likewise no matter of surprise that those new proselytes who possessed the means to do so were desirous to go up to Jerusalem and worship in His temple the God whom they have embraced. That great numbers of other Gentiles, not yet proselytes, came to Jerusalem to worship God and to offer sacrifices, is also mentioned by Josephus in different places. Among the very first fruits of Pentecost, and also among later converts, there were many “Grecians,”* who likely were first proselytes to the Jewish religion, but who as soon as they saw that the great “Light to enlighten the Gentiles” had come, they became

* Acts vi. 1.

Christians ; such as Nicolas the "proselyte of Antioch."* The Ethiopian eunuch, minister of Queen Candace, proves that at that time great men from distant lands and "mighty nations" went to Jerusalem to worship God. From the fact of having read earnestly in a copy of the Bible, and from his conversation with the apostle, we learn what an ardent desire existed among the Gentiles for the knowledge of God and His revelation ; and from the fact that his conversion and baptism were accomplished during a short interview, we see that such persons were well instructed in the word of God, waited with weeping eyes and longing soul for Him promised therein to the Gentiles, and needed only to know and believe that He who was promised had come and accomplished His work, and had opened the door for them.

Cornelius of Cesarea, the first fruits of the Gentiles, is a mighty pillar to our argument. Of him we hear that he was "a devout man, one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway."† From the gracious manner in which his prayers were heard and answered, we see that his supplications were for the manifestation of Him who was the "desire of all nations," and so he was honoured in finding first the desire of his devout soul. And how many hundreds and thousands of such devout and prayerful "daughters of Jerusalem" existed among the Gentiles at that time may be inferred from the instance above cited, and will be seen more clearly as we advance. The whole history of the formation and progress of the Church of Antioch‡ shows that these converted Gentiles belonged to those who waited with fasting and prayer for the fulfilment of these promises regarding their call and salvation. About the other Antioch in Pisidia we read : "And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, in which Paul and Barnabas preached Christ unto them, the Gentiles besought that the same words might be preached unto them the next Sabbath."§ This passage speaks plainly to the purpose. Here are eager "daughters of Jerusalem" inviting and praying the Shulamite to preach the gospel to them. Surely they must have been long waiting for it, and prepared to receive it. In the next verse we read that "many of the Jews and religious proselytes

* Acts vi. 5.

† Acts x. 2.

‡ See Acts xi. 20--30.

§ Acts xiii. 42.

followed Paul and Barnabas," from which we see that many of the waiting daughters of Jerusalem embraced in the meantime the Jewish religion, but turned Christians as soon as they heard that the "desire of all nations had come." "Next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God," (v. 44.) But when the unconverted Jews saw this great movement on the part of the Gentiles, they were filled with jealousy. Those wicked and selfish men wanted to make a monopoly, as it were, of what the gracious God had promised, without money and without price, to every hungry soul. When they saw that by the gospel the Gentiles would receive the same privileges as the Jews, and would no more consider them the special favourites of God, they opposed the apostles and blasphemed, and therefore the apostles told them that, seeing they had proved themselves unworthy of the gospel of Christ, they would turn to the Gentiles, "Christ being promised as a light to enlighten the Gentiles." "When the Gentiles heard this they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord, and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed."* This passage and the transactions it records strongly support our argument, and render a mere word in the way of illustration superfluous.

In Macedonia many a devout Cornelius must have continued in prayer and supplications to the God of Israel to send them the "desire of all nations." This was communicated to the great apostle in a vision, when he saw the "Man of Macedonia" standing before him and praying him, "Come over into Macedonia and help us." Can a better explanation be given of such passages of our Song as those: "Return, return, O thou Shulamite. . . . How beautiful are thy feet with shoes," &c. Return to help us, return with the Gospel of Peace; for O how beautiful art thou as a messenger, as a bearer of the good tidings of salvation to longing souls!

There was a Jewish synagogue at Thessalonica in which Paul preached on three successive Sabbaths, "And some of them (the Jews) believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas, and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few."† Now from this passage, as

* Acts xiii. 45—49.

† Acts xvii. 1—4.

well as from that above quoted regarding Antioch in Pisidia, and from several other passages in the Acts of the Apostles, it is clear that many awakened Greeks were then in the habit of joining the Jews in their devotional exercises in the synagogues on their Sabbath. At Thessalonica these God-fearing Greeks were not only numerous, but in "great multitude." These devout daughters of Jerusalem joined the Jews in the meantime, while eagerly waiting for the coming of the Saviour, and they were almost everywhere and always the foremost to accept Christ. Had not some of them been led astray by selfish and wicked Jews, who had a great moral influence upon them, and no wonder, for it was from them they learned to know the God of heaven, they would all have instantly accepted the gospel with great joy. And what could have given them greater joy than to have heard that the eagerly expected Messiah had come, that they were invited to come to Him in the bond of the covenant of grace, to become members of the Church of the living God—privileges which the Mosaical Jews never could, and never did, allow them, but uniformly told them that they must wait for them till the coming of Messiah, the Shiloh to whom the Gentiles should gather.

At Berea Paul and Silas went as usual to the Jewish synagogue and found the Jews there of a noble spirit; for, while at Thessalonica they had wicked men among them, who opposed the gospel out of jealousy, those of Berea "received the word with all readiness of mind, . . . many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men not a few."* Here we have again an instance of Greek ladies as well as men accustomed to join the Jews in their synagogue in the worship of God.

† We shall now accompany our great apostle for a little to the famous city of Athens, where, alas! we shall witness a spectacle of another nature. There he also preached Christ in the Jewish synagogue, and "disputed with the Jews and with the devout persons,"† *i.e.*, with the God-fearing Greeks who joined them in prayer. As he also addressed people in the streets, he soon became the lion of Athens, and the philosophers of different sects laid hold on him, and brought him before the court called Areopagus. There the

* Acts xvii. 10—12.

† Acts xvii. 17.

great champion of the cross delivered a short address in a strain of the highest eloquence, distinguished by its boldness, seriousness, simplicity, and wisdom, which at once impressed the hearts and stopped the mouths, and covered with confusion the proud philosophising inhabitants of that degraded, enslaved, and idolatrous, though highly cultivated city. This famous capital afforded a remarkable exhibition of the corruption of human nature when elevated to the highest pitch of prosperity, civilization, science, art, liberty (so-called), equality and self-government, when not regulated by God's true and only religion, which alone produces social as well as moral peace and real happiness. This perverted and miserable city, so much admired by men full of contradiction like herself, where a man was only safe so long as he remained in perfect obscurity, but in daily jeopardy as soon as he rendered great services to his ungrateful mother—this abode of free citizens, where the hero and benefactor seldom died a natural death unless it overtook him in banishment—this philosophising band of the most stupidly degrading idolatry, remained so to the very time of the Apostle's visit, fanatically attached to her innumerable abominations and dumb idols. Ancient Athens, like modern Rome, boasted that all her greatest philosophers were devoted worshippers of her gods, instead of saying that they were either hypocrites or cowards, who preferred to pass for idol worshippers, to drinking the cup of Socrates—and indeed why should they have cast away their lives for an uncertainty? Their knowledge of the God of heaven was so imperfect that it was no equivalent for certain death, even had they been sure that their murderers would order public mournings for them afterwards, as they did after the murder of Socrates. However, some one (or perhaps several) of her more daring sons, ashamed at seeing the stagnant degradation of his idolatrous mother in the midst of the general progress everywhere in the knowledge and adoration of the invisible and only true God, had on some favourable occasion introduced an altar dedicated to the *Unknown God*, and placed it among the public monuments of that city where all arts flourished, but that of becoming wise unto salvation. Who it was that introduced that altar, and at what period, we know not; but it is certain that the God to whom it was dedicated was worshipped by many,

though in ignorance of His holy attributes, and of His plan of salvation.* The general or philosopher who introduced it had certainly possessed a knowledge of that God, but as he would not introduce or proclaim Him publicly, from fear of the cup of Socrates, he thought that the altar alone might awaken in his countrymen a desire after Him. The Athenians dared not deny it, and, struck dumb by the argument of Paul, as the Pharisees were when the Lord asked them if John's baptism was from heaven or not, dismissed the singular stranger without entering into controversy with him. "Howbeit, certain men clave unto him, and believed; among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them."†

After a few days' labour, "Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth," and here, too, Paul "reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks." But the Jews having soon become jealous, and opposing the Apostles, they turned their addresses entirely to the Greeks. The first influential convert was Justus, a notable Greek, and one that worshipped God," in whose house the Apostle now established the centre of light. "And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptised. Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee, to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city."‡§

* See Acts xvii. 23.

† Acts xvii. 34.

‡ (Acts xviii. 1—11.

§ From all the above quotations from the Acts we see the remarkable fact that the *Greeks* were the prominent nation among the Gentiles in their eager expectation of the Messiah, and the first among the daughters of Jerusalem that gladly joined the daughter of Zion on her bringing the good tidings to the Gentiles. In connection with this fact we recommend the following passage in Zechariah to the serious consideration of the Biblical student. We shall quote the passage, and make some emendations, and a few short remarks in passing:—"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout for joy, O daughter of Jerusalem (*i.e.*, Gentile nations.) Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, . . . And He shall speak peace unto the Gentiles . . . As for thee also (*i.e.*, thou daughter of Jerusalem, hitherto excluded from Covenant privileges and blessings) by the blood of thy covenant (the New Covenant being theirs as much as Zion's), I have sent forth thy pri-

Here we stop in our researches, thinking that it has been already more than sufficiently proved that the knowledge of the one God promulgated by the captive Church at Babylon, and in all places of her dispersion, was not lost on the daughters of Jerusalem, but that the awakened search and struggle and desire for light, for God, and for salvation, continued to grow and make great progress; that at the time appointed by Providence for the introduction of light among the Gentiles, great multitudes of those had already either embraced the Jewish faith, or joined the Jews in their synagogues for worshipping and praying to the God of Israel, and for the reading of His law and prophets; that those God-fearing and, as they are called in Scripture language, "Devout men and women," eagerly waited with a longing heart, with a faithful and hopeful eye, for the coming of Emanuel their Deliverer and their "Desire," when the favoured daughter of Zion should come and invite and lead them into the "King's palace," into the sanctuary of her Beloved; that when the Shulamite went forth,

soners out of the pit wherein is no water (in the dreary pit of idolatry, in which they were so long, there was not a drop of water for the faint and weary soul). Turn ye to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope (ye who have waited so long in the open air as it were, because the sanctuary was shut to you, come in now to the everlasting fortress); for this day I render unto thee the מַגִּיד־מִשְׁנֶה (Magid-Mishneh) 'double speaker' (double advocate, *i.e.*, general mediator for Jew and Gentile at once.) For I have bent unto me Judah, filled Ephraim like a bow (*i.e.*, I have prepared, foreordained Jews of all tribes to fight the Gospel war), and I will stimulate (or awake, or encourage) thy sons, O Zion, along with thy sons, O Greece, and I will make thee (the united Church of Jew and Greek) as the sword of a mighty man" (*i.e.*, to conquer the world. Zech. ix. 9—17.) Be it remembered that the most numerous and most faithful fellow-labourers of the Apostle Paul were converted Greeks such as Timothy, Titus, Erastus, and many others. It should likewise be kept in mind that before Paul had got these fellow-labourers of the children of Greece he and Barnabas were "forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia." (Acts xvi. 6.) But when by his preaching it in Greece so many Churches were established, so many "children of Greece joined the children of Zion," and became together as "the sword of a mighty man," the combined army went forth to conquer the world. We confess never before to have seen this passage in Zechariah in this light. It is from the above researches in the Acts regarding the waiting in prayer of the daughter of Jerusalem, and having seen that the Greeks figure always as the foremost, that this passage forced itself upon our mind in this new light. Although this is not the place to enter more deeply into it (as it surely deserves) and enlarge on its explanation, we could not help recommending it to those readers who delight in such discoveries and studies.

shod and girded, to invite those waiting multitudes to the feast which the great King had made in honour of His Son, whom the proud Pharisee despised, they accepted the invitation with thankfulness, and received the good tidings with inexpressible joy ; that if in some places some of them opposed the Apostles, it was owing to the wickedness of the unbelieving Jews, who used, or rather abused, their influence on those poor Gentiles in regard to religious matters, in order to lead them astray, and to persuade them that this Jesus was not the promised Messiah, the Shiloh and Saviour of the Gentiles and of the whole world. We now return to our Song.

THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM (*continued*).

7. How beautiful art thou, and how pleasant !
O thou love with many delights !
8. This thy stature is like a palm-tree,
And thy breasts like its clusters ;
9. I say, I will go up to this palm-tree ;
I will lay hold on its branches ;
But I pray thee,
Let thy breasts be like clusters of the vine,
And the odour of thy breath (nose) as citrons ;
10. And thy mouth (or palate) like choicest wine,
Going on straightly to my Beloved—
Causing the lips of the sleeping to speak.

Though the substance of these four verses in their general bearing may be seen in a clear light from what has been advanced already, yet in order to explain the particular expressions and images it will not be amiss shortly to recapitulate the sum of our illustrative materials. In the mysterious providence of God, the captivity and dispersion of His ancient Church to Babylon and throughout the vast dominions of the kings of Persia served the great purpose of preparing the Gentile nations for the day of their visitation. The knowledge of the only true God which the captive Bride propagated in the places of her captivity, and which those still left behind, or were yet dispersing, continued to propagate even after a portion had returned and were re-

established at Jerusalem, continued to increase gradually, till it grew to such an earnest and irresistible desire in multitudes, that in anticipation of the coming of Shiloh who would remove the partition wall and grant them free entrance into His sanctuary and full membership in His Church, they joined the Jews in the meantime in their prayers, in the reading of the law and prophets in their synagogues; and it was there that the great Apostle of the Gentiles found them when he brought them the tidings of salvation. And this is the theme of this chapter of the Song.

The awakened "daughters of Jerusalem," who in the infancy of their knowledge of God made one step in advance by aiding the captive daughter of Zion to seek and find her Beloved, soon discovered that this step had not advanced them much. While the daughter of Zion had returned to Jerusalem and had rebuilt the altar, temple, and walls, and rejoiced once more in the communion of her God and Saviour, they still remained without in the darkness of idolatry and pernicious superstition, and aliens from the covenant blessings. At the same time they knew from the holy oracles communicated to them by the Bride, that a time was appointed when the Sun of Righteousness should begin to shine upon them and disperse the clouds of darkness—when the Bridegroom should manifest His glory to His Bride in a special manner, and renew, or make a new covenant with her, and send her forth to call the Gentiles to join her in that everlasting Covenant for salvation and eternal bliss. To that happy event the waiting daughters of Jerusalem looked forth with eager anxiety; and in anticipation of that glorious period they exclaimed, "Return, return, O thou Shulamite. . . . How beautiful are thy footsteps with shoes," &c. Throughout the first six verses of this chapter they describe in glowing imagery and rapturous language of joy the beauty and splendour of that Bride when she shall thus come among them with her celestial message, announcing to them the tidings of salvation. In verse 7 they only conclude the preceding list of praises by saying, "How beautiful art thou, and how pleasant! O thou love with many delights!" *i.e.* "O thou beloved of the great God, with all thy various graces, privileges, attractions, and excellent qualities, with thy peace of soul, and

serenity of conscience, with thy happiness in time and with the sure hope of future glory in eternity; thou art truly beautiful at present; but O how pleasant (or sweet) wilt thou be when carrying forth the torch of light to the millions that sit now in deep darkness!" Meanwhile the poor and awakened daughters of Jerusalem longed for communion with the holy and great God of Zion, and with his lovely and highly privileged Church. But the high and insurmountable partition wall, the thundering and flaming Sinai, with its complicated and severe law, and ceremonies, and types, and shadows, and curses, and circumcisions, and lustrations, and sacrifices, and the yet entire veil, and the enclosure which separated the court of the Gentiles from that of Israel, stood in the way. In the following verses the daughters of Jerusalem declare therefore their ardent desire to join in the meantime the Church of God, but pray the latter that she would make some concessions to them, stoop down a little to them, instead of requiring them to mount and climb the enormous and rugged height of Mount Sinai on which she stood.

"This thy stature," *i.e.* as thou art constituted at present under the Mosaic dispensation, on the summit of Sinai, "is like a palm tree," *i.e.* enormously high, "and thy breasts like its clusters," (or, "as the clusters thereof.") In the East the trunk of the palm tree reaches a stupendous height when its lower branches are regularly cut off below to make 'it push up. Its branches hang majestically round in the form of an umbrella, and among them are suspended the rich clusters of dates, sometimes of the astonishing weight of between twenty and thirty pounds each. The sense, therefore, of this sublime image is, that the daughters of Jerusalem declare that they knew how to value the riches of the blessings attached to that dispensation, the high privileges, blessings, and precious fruits of communion with the Church of God, but that the tree from amongst whose branches these rich fruits are suspended was immensely high, and quite impossible to be reached by them in their present state, *i.e.* that the Law, with its hard conditions, was so lofty, so difficult to fulfil, that it would only be heart-rending for them to look up to the precious fruits and rich nourishment which it offers to the soul, while they could not reach it. In the following verses, therefore, these

starving souls declare their determination to try and climb that palm tree, that mount of Sinai, that height of the Law, but pray the Church to pity them, to reduce her clusters to a lower standard, to make them as low as those of the vine, that their attempt might not be in vain.

“I say (or, I resolved, I determined), I will go up on this palm tree (or, I will climb up, &c.), I will lay hold on its branches” (*Sansinav* means the small stumps or protuberances, left from the cut off branches below, which are round about the stem, and form a natural ladder for the Arab to climb up its lofty trunk; but mark, it does not mean the real branches on high, among which is the fruit.) “But I pray thee, let thy breasts be as the clusters of the vine, and the odour of thy breath like citrons,” *i.e.*, We shall try and do our utmost to climb up the tree of that holy and exalted religion as far as it is possible for us, we shall cut down all our idols, abandon the lusts of the flesh, the pride of the eye, the foolish vanities of this world (climb up on the stumps of its cut off branches, obey its prohibiting laws and commandments), but we despair of ever being able to reach its real branches and the precious fruits of this tall tree of life if it remain at its present height. We pray thee therefore to pity us, to remember that we are but weak inquirers, newly come out of the thick darkness accumulated for many ages, and to stoop a little down to reach us the “breasts of thy consolations,” as a loving mother does to her tender babe, to lower down the rich clusters with the precious fruits of thy religion (thy doctrines, conditions, and covenant rules), to the height of a cluster of the vine which a child can reach; “and let the odour of thy breath,” let thy language, instructions, and comfort, be encouraging, cheering, refreshing to us “like citrons.” Here the reader will remember that when the Bride was represented in chap. ii. 5 as overwhelmed and “faint with love,” she requested her attendants to “support her with citrons;” now it is the daughters of Jerusalem who hunger and thirst after righteousness, who long and faint for communion with the God of Zion and His Church, and who pray the latter to strengthen and refresh them by making her consoling and comforting words to them like the odour of citrons. And not only this, but they also request the Bride to intercede the Bridegroom for them to procure for them His divine

favour, that when they are accepted as children, and become members of the Church they might address to Him their own prayers, praises, and adorations.

To this purpose they request the Bride that "her mouth" (or palate) should be as the "choicest wine." Both figure and substance are clear in this phrase, which means that her intercessory prayers should have in a spiritual sense the quality of good wine. The operation of the wine in the figure, and the efficacy of the interceding prayer in the substance, are divided into two branches, 1st, that of הֵלֵךְ לְדוֹדִי לִמְעִישָׁרִים (Holech ledodi lemeisharim) "going (or passing, or reaching), to my Beloved straightly (smoothly or pleasantly), *i.e.*, that thy interceding prayer for us may, like the choice wine poured on the altar of sacrifice, mount directly towards heaven, and be accepted by my Beloved (mark, this is the first time that the daughters of Jerusalem call the God of Zion their Beloved), as a sweet smelling savour; and 2d, "Causing the lips of the sleeping to speak," *i.e.*, pray for us that the Lord may "open our lips, that our mouths may show forth His praise"—that we who slept so long during the dark night of our misery may also begin to adore the God of heaven in spirit and in truth. Perhaps there is here allusion to the manner in which the Israelites were wont to repeat silently the prayer made aloud, either by the priest in the temple, or by the leader or precentor in their synagogues, when their lips only moved (lisped, and which is the meaning of בִּלְשׁוֹן [Dovev] "causing to lisp"), but their voice was not heard for otherwise there would have been confusion. Such was the prayer of Hanna, the mother of the prophet Samuel; but as individual and extemporary prayers were usually made in a loud voice, the high-priest Eli feared that her lispings might be the effect of the excitement of wine; but the pious woman explained to Him the real reason, that it was the heaviness of her heart, and that her petition was such that she could not make it aloud (1 Sam. i.). Thus the meaning of our phrase may be that while the Church was invited to offer an ardent prayer on behalf of the daughters of Jerusalem, the latter said, that they would silently repeat it after her, as was customary in these days; and the beauty of the image loses nothing, and the substance is clearly seen and needs no farther explanation.

Now that we have seen the spiritual sense of the passage, we have only to show that the images employed in it are not strangers in Scripture. In the Church of God there is beauty, sweetness, and “love with many delights.” David said, “How excellent (or precious) is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the rivers of thy pleasures.”* “Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts; we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.”† It is this treasure that the daughters of Jerusalem had discovered—they desired to hide themselves under the shadow of Jehovah’s wings; and to be able to say too, “My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.”‡ Solomon makes here the daughter of Jerusalem compare the Church to a stately palm-tree, and David said, “I am as a green olive-tree in the house of God.”§ “The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree; he shall grow (vigorously) like the cedar in Lebanon.”|| All the other images in our passage will be found in the following, “They shall lament for the teats, for the delightful field, for the fruitful vine.”¶ “That the images here stand for fruits of righteousness, for the spiritual and delicious food of Jehovah’s temple, and for the joy and happiness of His children in the privileges of His covenant, we see from what follows, “Until the Spirit be poured on us from on high, and the wilderness become like Carmel. . . . And judgment dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness be established in Carmel. And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance for ever,” &c.** “I will be as the dew unto Israel; He shall blossom as a lily, and cast forth his roots like Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return (be converted unto God), they shall revive as the corn, and blossom as the vine; the mentioning of His name shall be as the wine of

* Ps. xxxvi. 7, 8.

† Ps. lxxv. 4.

‡ Ps. lxxiii. 5.

§ Ps. lii. 8.

|| Ps. xcii. 12.

¶ Is. xxxii. 12.

** Is. xxxii. 15—17

Lebanon.”* “The mouth of the righteous is a well of life. . . . The lips of the righteous feed many. . . . The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable.”† These passages amply explain that of the Song.

Such then are the images, by which the Spirit of God foretold by Solomon the future hungering and thirsting of the Gentile nations after the communion of the only true and living God, and that while they would wait patiently for the promised day of their visitation, for the appearance of the great Deliverer to whom shall be the gathering of the Gentiles, they would in the meantime implore the Old Covenant Church to receive them into communion, but begging her not to insist upon their climbing the whole height of her exalted law, or in the language of Peter, not “To put a yoke on the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear.”‡ The interesting history of the Gentile Church at Antioch, which was so much troubled even in the apostolic days, but which so heartily rejoiced when she received the decision of the Church of Jerusalem, that it was by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law, that Jew and Gentile are saved in Christ, is the best explanation of our passage. From it also we may infer what their state must have been before Christ’s coming, when “great multitudes” demanded admission into the Church, but were told that they must be circumcised and fulfil the whole law and keep all its commandments and ordinances, and lay its curse upon themselves (for to fulfil it was impossible, and none ever did), and when even on these hard conditions, only the third generation of the proselyte was admitted to all its privileges.

But we must observe that this was not an arbitrary dealing on the part of the ancient Church. Unjust and erroneous as were the views of some Judaising Christians in the days of the apostles, forgetful or ignorant as they were of so many passages of Scripture which clearly foretold that in the Messianic New Covenant the Gentiles would come not to the ceremonial works of the law, but to the spiritual temple of God built by faith, not to Sinai but to Zion, and that “the righteous then shall live by faith” and not by dead works;

* Hos. xiv. 5—7. † Pro. x. 11, 21, 32.

‡ Acts xv. 10.

still as long as the temple stood, and the Old Covenant was in all its vigour, and its conditions and obligations immutable, it was not in the power of the Church to make concessions. As long as the "partition-wall" continued, and the vail remained entire, and before the "new and living way" was consecrated by Him who is "the way, the truth, and the life," that ancient Church had it not in her power to change the conditions of the law on any pretext whatever. The great work of breaking down and demolishing that partition-wall was long before assigned by the prophets to the "precious corner-stone laid in Zion," and neither man nor angel could anticipate it a single hour. Hence the Church answered the demand.

THE CHURCH.

11. I am my Beloved's (or, for my Beloved),
And His desire is towards me (or for me.)

"You daughters of Jerusalem, you Gentile nations have no right yet to call my God your 'Beloved,' for 'I am for my Beloved,' the only chosen one, and so I must remain until He come to introduce the new dispensation. "And His desire is toward me" (upon, or, for me), such is His desire that I remain separate from all the nations until He come. Indeed this was His own statement in chap. vi. 8, 9, that though there were threescore queens, fourscore concubines, and virgins without number, His dove, His beloved and chosen Church, was "only one," and so she was destined to remain until the appointed time. To enter that Church under the old dispensation no one could retain his nationality, but was obliged to be absorbed in the house of Israel, and on the condition mentioned by David, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the king greatly delight in thy beauty; for He is thy Lord, and worship thou Him."* Full obedience to the law of Moses, entire submission to all its ceremonies, commandments, statutes, and ordinances, complete abandonment of nationality, family ties, habits, and affections, and the resolution of Ruth the Moabitess,† were all required before one could

* Ps. xlv. 10, 11.

† Ruth i. 16, 17.

become a member of that Church. But this was a height to which the multitudes of the awakened daughters of Jerusalem could not climb. Their only alternative therefore was to wait patiently and prayerfully until the Shiloh should come and prepare the way, and send His Church to invite them and speak peace to their souls. In the above quoted examples from the Acts of the Apostles we saw that they did so. Not able as yet to enter the temple of the Lord at Jerusalem, they entered the synagogues and joined the daughter of Zion in prayer, and heard the law and the prophets read, and rejoiced in the promises regarding the day of their visitation. Meanwhile the Church was not indifferent to their requests and condition; for though she could make no concessions to them, she is represented in the following passage as praying the Lord to hasten His coming and bring salvation to those lonely strangers who knocked at the door of His sanctuary.

THE CHURCH (*continued.*)

12. Come, O my Beloved,
Let us go forth into the fields;
Let us lodge in the villages.
13. Let us get up early to the vineyards;
Let us see if the vine flourish,
Whether the tender grape appear (developed)
If the pomegranates bud forth—
There will I give my friends unto Thee.
14. The mandrakes diffused an odour,
And at our gates are various delicious spices;
Both new and old, O my Beloved,
Have I laid up for Thee.

The prophet Zephaniah said in the name of the Lord, regarding the Messianic period, "For then will I turn unto the nations (אֲמִיּוֹת *amim* means 'the Gentile nations' every where. See *amim* in connection with Shiloh, Gen. xlix. 10) a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord to serve him with one consent. . . Sing, O daughter of Zion, shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem (probably meaning the Gentile nations who would also call on the name of the

Lord.) The Lord hath taken away (or removed) thy judgment; he hath cast out thine enemy (*i.e.*, removed the curse of the law along with it); the King of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more.”* The first signs of the fulfilment of this glorious prophecy appeared at the period of which this chapter of the Song treats. Then the daughter of Zion saw that a “pure language” was already given to multitudes of Gentiles “to call upon the name of the Lord,” and to express an ardent desire “to serve him with one consent.” Hence the ancient Church perceived that the coming of her Lord and King could not be afar off,—that the *partition wall*, the continual *lawsuit*, the weight of the curse of the law upon herself, and the “covering vail spread over all nations,” must soon be removed, and the faithful and God-fearing “daughters of Jerusalem” incorporated in the one universal Church of the living God. And though she had no power to make any concessions to these knocking and waiting “daughters of Jerusalem,” as long as the old exclusive Covenant was yet valid and not superseded by the New Covenant, she did what she could in praying to her heavenly Bridegroom to hasten His coming, and the fulfilment of His precious promises to the Gentile nations.

“Come, my Beloved, let us go forth into the fields, let us lodge in the villages.” Surprising language this for the daughter of Zion, for the ancient Church who was always so strongly attached to her Mount Zion, Moriah, Temple, and Jerusalem! But since she had been deprived of the Ark and Cherubim, and of the presence of her Lord in the midst of them, and since she had seriously examined the signs of the times in connection with the numerous and explicit Messianic prophecies, she distinctly saw that when the King should come to introduce the New Covenant, the true worship of God would no longer be confined to Jerusalem,—that everywhere the “God who is a Spirit would be worshipped in spirit and in truth,”—and that she would then have to go forth, along with her Beloved (“And, lo, I am with you always, unto the end of the world”), into the length and breadth of the wilderness of this world, in order to turn it into an Eden, and to visit its “fields and villages,” and

* Zeph. iii. 9, 14, 15.

cultivate there the plants of righteousness. In the sublime chapter in Ezekiel where the Lord rebuked the bad shepherds of Israel, and promised to His flock to send them the great and good Shepherd, we read, "And I will set up one Shepherd over them . . . even my servant David, and he shall feed them. . . . I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a Prince among them. . . . And I will make with them a covenant of peace . . . and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods."* This is exactly the object of the invitation addressed by the Bride to her Bridegroom in the passage before us, praying the great Prince of Peace of the house of David to come, that they should go forth into the countries, towns, and villages, and sow everywhere the precious seed, and plant the plants of righteousness, and fill the earth with delicious fruit to the glory of His name.

Regarding the images employed in verses 13 and 14, that they would see "if the vine flourish, if the tender grape appear, if the pomegranates bud," &c., it is not difficult to perceive that they signify the spiritual state and progress of the Gentile nations, of the new plants among the daughters of Jerusalem, which were languishing for the watering season, for the coming of their Saviour, and the outpouring of His Spirit upon His Church, and for sending her forth to plant, water, and cultivate them, and making them produce precious fruits for the honour and glory of His Father in heaven. And therefore what was once called "one vineyard" is now called by the Church herself, "vineyards," for the question is no more regarding the one exclusive Church at Jerusalem, but regarding the many churches to be established throughout the countries, towns, and fields and villages of the Gentiles, though all these branches form still but one Church universal, under the One Head who is Christ. Hence also the Bride, the daughter of Zion, or ancient Church, said with regard to that happy period, "There"—namely, in those "fields and villages" in Samaria, Antioch, Corinth, Macedonia, Berea, Asia, Africa, and Europe—"There will I give my friends (דודאי, *Dodai*, my friends, my beloved companions) unto Thee." Not in Jerusalem only, but in the world at large, wherever we shall

* Ezek. xxxiv. 23—25.

find waiting lilies, praying roses, willing plants, I will introduce them in marriage unto Thee, and bring them into the bond of Thy covenant, as plants which have been bought with a great price and belong to Thee. (The word *תן*, *Ten*, is always employed in Scripture for “giving in marriage.”)* And it was the ancient Church who was destined to give the daughters of Jerusalem in marriage to her Beloved, to introduce the Gentile believers into the bond of the New Covenant, as David said in his beautiful Psalm, which was to serve for an outline to our Song, “Virgins in rich attire shall she (the Church) lead to the King” (Ps. xlv. 14. See our new Translation of the Psalms on this passage.) And so said the great ambassador of Christ and the representative of the daughter of Zion, to the already espoused daughters of Jerusalem, “For I am jealous over you with Godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one Husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”†

With regard to the frequency of the application in Scripture in general of plants, flowers, and fruits, as the representatives of spiritual things, in the same way as those in the Song, and especially in the passage before us, we shall add the following example to those which have already been advanced. When the prophet Joel speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem, and of the captivity of the Church in Babylon, he says, “For a nation is come up upon my land, strong and without number. . . . He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig-tree. . . . Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth. The meat-offering and the drink-offering is cut off from the house of the Lord: the priests, the Lord’s ministers mourn. . . . The vine is dried up, and the fig-tree languishes; the pomegranite-tree, the palm-tree, and the apple-tree, even all the trees of the field are withered, because joy hath withered away from the sons of men.”‡ While these are the melancholy pictures of spiritual desolations, suffering, misery, and destitution, the same images are used by the prophet to depict the spiritual joy and prosperity of the restored Church and in Messianic days, “Fear not, O

* Gen. xxxiv. 8, 12, 14, 16, 21, xli. 45; Ex. ii. 21, xxi. 4; 1 Sam. xviii. 17, 19, 21, 27, &c., &c.

† 2 Cor. xi. 2.

‡ Joel i. 6—13.

earth, be glad and rejoice; for the Lord will do great things. Be not afraid ye beasts of the field; for the pastures in the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig-tree and the vine do yield their strength. Be glad then ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God; for He hath given you the Teacher of Righteousness, and he will bring down unto you the rain, even the former and the latter rain in abundance" or "in excellency."*

In the last verse of this chapter the Bride sums up the signs of the times as the reason for His speedy appearance, "The mandrakes diffused an odour, and at our gates are various delicious spices" (or "delightful things")—*i.e.*, the field is prepared for Thy visit, beautiful flowers wait eagerly for Thy coming to water them with Thy Spirit, to make them bud and blossom through the influence of the Sun of Righteousness. The awakened, praying, and longing daughters of Jerusalem are knocking at our gates desiring admission for communion. "Both new and old," *i.e.*, such as have continued for the time in prayer and supplication awaiting Thy coming, and such as are daily added to them and swell their number; but "O my Beloved, I have laid them up for Thee," I can do nothing for them until Thou come and prepare the way, and give me orders to go forth, and speak peace to them in Thy name.

CHAPTER VIII.

ARGUMENT OF THE FOUR FIRST VERSES OF THIS CHAPTER WHICH BELONG TO, AND FORM THE CONCLUSION OF, THE THIRD PART OF THE SONG.

(Vv. 1—2.) The ardent prayers of the ancient Church for the coming of the Covenant Angel into His temple, for the appearance of Messiah in the flesh, as a son of Zion, and the expressions of the joy which this would cause to her, and how she would receive and entertain Him. (V. 3.) The celebration of His appearance. (V. 4.) The third conjuration of the Church addressed to the daughters of Jerusalem not to disturb the love till it reach perfection.

* Joel ii. 21—24.

THE CHURCH *continues*—

1. Oh that Thou wert as my brother,
Sucking the breasts of my mother!
Then finding Thee without I would embrace Thee
And none would then despise me.
2. I would lead Thee and bring Thee
Into the house of my mother,
That Thou mightest instruct me ;
I would make Thee drink of the spiced wine—
Of the juice of the pomegranate.

This wonderful passage, which, along with the common version, we have rendered in a conditional sense, might be rendered also in a positive form. The ardent wish of the Bride *לִי יִתְנַחֵם כְּאָח לִי* (*Mi yitencha keach li*) may be rendered "Would that thou wert given soon as a brother unto me," *i.e.*, would that according to so many promises thy coming into this world in the shape of a brother, bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh, partaker of the same human nature, that thou wert a son of Zion as I am the daughter, may speedily be realized and fulfilled. "Then I will embrace Thee (instead of 'I would') I will lead Thee Thou wilt instruct me I will make Thee drink," &c., &c. The import of this ardent desire of the ancient Church is clear enough when we place it beside her prayer contained in the last three verses of the foregoing chapter, where she implored that he would speedily come to her; "Come, my Beloved, let us go forth into the fields," &c. The last of her seers had announced the coming of Messiah as at hand, and declared that it would take place suddenly. "The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come into his temple, even the Angel of the Covenant whom ye delight in; behold, he cometh, saith the Lord of Hosts."* It has already been remarked above that the Church at that time compared her Messianic oracles with the signs of the times. Having seen so great numbers of the daughters of Jerusalem repeatedly knocking at her door for communion, and earnestly waiting for the coming of Shiloh their deliverer, she became

* Mal. iii. 1

more ardent and more constant in her prayer for His speedy appearance. If it be asked, Who was that Church, seeing that when "He came to His own," the great bulk of the nation received Him not? we answer, that the faithful, waiting, and praying Church of that time was represented by the Josephs and Marys, Elizabeths and Zachariases, Hannas and Simeons, and hundreds like them who were "waiting for the consolation of Israel." From the fact that the same Simeon said by the Holy Spirit, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel;" from the fact that the prophetess Anna (or Hanna) "spake of Him (*i.e.*, of the new-born child) to all them that looked for redemption in Israel," we see that there were great numbers who waited in fasting and prayer for the coming of the Redeemer; that though many of them, through the influence of the blinded, selfish, and then all-important Scribes and Pharisees, the guardians and explainers of the law, whose opinion was decisive, and fitted to lead astray the best of men, fell back for a time and remained in obscurity, they, according to Simeon's prophecy, recovered and rose again to living faith soon after the blessed day of Pentecost, when even many of the priests and Pharisees were converted and swelled the numbers of the disciples. And this very astonishing conflict was foretold by the prophets. The same prophet who called the Messiah "Israel's delight," and "the Lord whom ye seek," also adds, "But who will abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?" *i.e.*, How few will be the number of those who will immediately recognize Him as the promised Messiah, as the Son of God, and stand by Him as by the angel of the covenant come in the flesh! The apostle Paul speaks of the "blindness in part that happened unto Israel," as part of the mysterious plan of God for the gathering in of the Gentiles, "Through their fall salvation hath come unto the Gentiles." But this mass of unbelieving Jews in the time of the apostles continued to belong to the Church of God, and waited with the rest for the salvation of God by Emanuel. When Christ came, and they rejected Him, and even crucified Him, and refused afterwards to accept the repeated invitation to repentance and faith by their converted brethren, then the Christian Jewish Church of Jerusalem was sent forth to invite the

Gentiles in their stead. These came with great joy and joined the daughter of Zion, and occupied the place of that mass of Jews who were concluded in unbelief, and were, alas, to remain so (as a mass) until the "fulness of the Gentiles be brought in," and then receive mercy through their mercy, and be introduced to the Bridegroom by the medium of the Gentile Church, as the Gentiles were once introduced by the daughter of Zion, their elder sister, who embraced Christ, and alone composed *the Church* at His advent and until the calling in of the Gentiles, by whom she was not only joined but absorbed. From what has been said it is easily seen that the "little sister" of verse 8 are these unbelieving Jews.

Seeing, therefore, how the ancient Church prayed for the speedy coming of her Saviour, we understand her language when she said, "Oh that Thou wert as my brother, sucking the breasts of my mother!" The Apostle Paul explained this language though indirectly: "For both he that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren. . . . Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same. . . . Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren."* The Church longed and prayed for that precious time, for the coming of the desired Covenant Angel in the midst of her, in the shape of a brother after the flesh, the son of mother Zion, brought up and educated under the law, and in obedience to it, and within the bond of the ancient covenant, thus partaking of the same spiritual food with herself, and what she calls, "sucking the breasts of my mother." "Then," says she, "finding Thee without (or abroad) I would (or will) embrace Thee." In her former prayer she desired Him to come and go forth with her into the fields and villages, there to cultivate flowers, to plant gardens, which signified her going forth, in His company, for the conversion of the Gentile nations. Hence she means to say here, that then, or after His coming in the flesh, she would embrace, acknowledge, and adore Him, not only in Jerusalem, and on Mount Zion, and within the temple, but "without," or "abroad," everywhere, in the wilderness,

* Heb. ii. 11—18.

among the Gentiles, in their cities, towns, and villages—“And none would (or will) then despise me,” (or, “reproach me”). This seemingly strange expression can be easily explained by several passages in Scripture. Isaiah said, regarding the Messianic period, that when the thick covering, the separating “vail which is spread over all the nations,” shall be torn and removed at Jerusalem, then the Lord will “remove the reproach of His people from all the earth.”* Ezekiel, when speaking of the great Shepherd whom the Lord would raise up to feed His scattered flock, says in the name of God, “And I will raise up for them (or unto them) a Plant of Renown, and they shall be no more consumed with hunger (spiritual hunger) in the land, neither shall they bear any more the reproach of the Gentiles.”† Joel, in his prophecy about the “Teacher of righteousness” to be given unto the Church, says: “And ye shall praise the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you; and my people shall never be ashamed. And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God, and that there is none else: and my people shall never be ashamed.”‡ The same prophet in the same chapter tells us what that reproach of Israel among the nations was: “And let them say (*i.e.*, the priests and ministers of God), Spare thy people, O Lord, and expose not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen make a by-word of them: wherefore should they say among the nations, Where is their God?”§ Here we see that the reproach of captive Israel among the heathen nations was twofold, 1st, Because of their calamities, dispersion, and sufferings, and 2d, Because they worshipped an invisible, and to the heathen an unknown God. This twofold reproach of Israel from the Gentile nations was to be removed by two events, 1st, By the removal of the “covering veil” from the eyes of the blinded heathen, and by shewing them that the invisible God of Israel is the only true and living God; and 2d, By raising to Israel the “Plant of Renown,” by the coming of the Saviour of Jew and Gentile from the family of Israel according to the flesh, and by showing to the Gentiles that the dispersion of Israel among them was greatly conducive

* Is. xxv. 7, 8.

† Joel ii. 26, 27.

‡ Ezek. xxxiv. 29.

§ Joel ii. 17.

to their own salvation, in having prepared them for Christ. Hence the suffering Church said: "Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy, when I fall (or though I fall), I shall rise again; when I sit in darkness the Lord is a light unto me. . . . He shall bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness. Then she that is mine enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her who said unto me, Where is the Lord thy God?"* And Isaiah said about the comforted mourners of Zion, "And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the nations; all that see them shall acknowledge them that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed."†

In the second verse the Bride promised to her Beloved that on His coming she would lead Him into her mother's house, and that while she would there receive instruction from Him, she would recompense Him with spiced wine and juice of pomegranates. In chap. iii. 4 the same Bride told us that in the days of David and Solomon she had found her long absent Beloved, that she laid hold on Him and would not let Him go, until she had brought Him into the house of her mother; and there it was clear enough that she referred to the sanctuary which David had prepared on Mount Zion, and which Solomon afterwards changed into His magnificent temple on Moriah, which sanctuary the Bride styled "her mother's house," being Zion's palace. Nor can there be the least doubt that the same expression in this verse signifies any thing else, but that she would bring Him into the temple for two purposes; that He might there instruct her about His New Covenant, and that she might regale Him with her love, faith, praise, prayer, thanksgiving, and obedience, all which are represented by the figure of spiced wine, and the juice of pomegranate. Moreover, we know that the blessed Saviour came several times into mother Zion's house, the temple, to which the prophets of old promised that honour centuries before its fulfilment. The first time He was brought there a tender babe, and though He could not then instruct by Himself, the Holy Spirit did the work for Him, for He instructed Simeon, and Anna, and other saints, who brought the promised spiced wine (praise and adoration) and offered it to the blessed child, and to the

* Mic. vii. 8-10.

† Is. lxi. 9.

Father in heaven who sent Him. When He was twelve years old He was again brought into it, when He introduced Himself into the midst of the doctors, "both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers." When His parents remonstrated with Him for having absented Himself without their knowledge, His answer was, "How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"* During the few years of His official ministry, He went up several times to Jerusalem, on the occasion of the feasts of the Passover and tabernacles, and instructed multitudes there in the temple. At last the Bride who found and embraced Him brought Him into her mother's house with great solemnity, and with shouts of triumph and joy; "and when He was come nigh, even now at the descent at the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice, and to praise God with a loud voice, for all the mighty works that they had seen: Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord; praise in heaven, and glory in the highest."†

There is something very remarkable in the emphasis which the prophets of old, in their oracles regarding the Messiah's coming, laid upon the fact of *His coming into the temple*, to honour it with His presence, and fill it with His glory; and if we consider seriously what that temple represented under the Mosaic economy, and that the Angel of that Covenant was now to come (in the flesh), to enter it, to glorify His law in fulfilling it, and to wind up as it were all the affairs belonging to that economy, and put on it His own seal to show, that though it was only a preparatory dispensation, yet it was holy and ordained by God, and that therefore not the smallest part of it could be violated until it should all be fulfilled; we say that when we consider these things, we need not be surprised at the weight which the seers of old laid upon the event of *His coming into His temple*. Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi were clear and explicit on this subject, and this passage of the Song, which is nothing else but a wonderful oracle revealed long before by the Holy Spirit to Solomon, distinctly declares the same

* Luke ii. 40—52.

† Luke, xix. 37, 38.

event, in the form of a promise by the Bride to introduce Him into that temple when He came. In connection with the above observation, it is really astonishing to see another fact, viz., that often as Jesus was in His temple, great as was the authority He assumed in attacking the merchants, in overturning the tables of the money changers, and in treating them in the language they deserved—hard as were His doctrines, offensive as were His rebukes, and severe as was His condemnation of His deadly enemies, the least insult was never offered to Him in that house! He was always listened to by the great and heterogeneous multitudes with the greatest reverence and decorum, and always praised and admired. Once his enemies dared to send men to lay hands on Him while teaching there, but as soon as they entered they were fascinated by the majesty of the Angel of the Covenant, and were unable to move; and when asked by their wicked rulers why they had not executed their order, they answered that they could not, for “never any man spake like this man.” Was not this an extraordinary and mysterious work of Omnipotent Providence, that never for a single moment, and never by a single person, the Angel of the Covenant was slighted or disturbed, or interrupted while in His temple? Was not this intended to show to His blinded and enraged enemies that He was Lord of that temple, and that in it no power under heaven could dispute or slight His divine authority! In the country, in Galilee, and other places, He was several times interrupted in His teaching, abandoned by the multitudes, and even threatened with violence; but nothing of the kind ever occurred in the temple. The promise of His Bride was thus literally executed. She led Him, and brought Him into her mother’s house, and there while He gave her instruction, she yielded to Him obedience, love, praise, and reverence.

While we have thus endeavoured to explain the first two verses, in which the Bride still implored His speedy arrival, we have largely introduced the reality of His coming into His temple, which the Bride announces in the next verse.

3. His left hand is under my head,
And His right hand embraceth me.

Once before the Bride used this expression in chap. ii. 6,

and it was explained there to refer to the memorable day at Mount Sinai, when, on the eighth day of the feast of the dedication of the tabernacle (the general dedication feast for the whole nation) the fire from heaven descended upon the altar of sacrifice before the eyes of all the people of Israel; when the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle, and a splendid light was spread over it like a fiery covering, and the pillar of cloud and fire surrounded Israel's camp, then the astonished and adoring Bride exclaimed, "His left hand is under my head, and His right hand embraceth me."* No such expression was employed by the Bride even in her enthusiastic description of the solemnities that took place on the dedication of Solomon's temple,† for though on that day, too, the fire from heaven came down upon the altar, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple, it was by no means such a clear, such a striking and visible manifestation of the divine glory and splendour of the Covenant Angel as that at Sinai. In Solomon's temple nothing was visible after the smoke and cloud filled it, while at Mount Sinai the glory of the Lord was displayed in a visible manner before all Israel, and continued so for a long time by day and by night: "For the cloud of the Lord was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journey."‡ It is very remarkable that these two extraordinary manifestations of the Lord to His Bride, the Church, have taken place only twice, once at the ratification of the Old Covenant, made by the first sacrifices offered on the altar of the newly erected tabernacle in the wilderness, and the second time at the coming of the Covenant Angel into His temple to make an end of sacrifice and oblation, to seal up and abolish the old, and introduce the New Covenant. Then He appeared in a bright cloud of fiery splendour, at the ratification of the old covenant made and sealed by the blood of bulls and goats, sprinkled by Aaron, the mortal high priest, upon the sanctuary, and its vessels and altars, and upon Israel His Bride; but now He came in the flesh, wrapped not in a fiery cloud, but in a body of flesh and blood, bearing as it were upon Himself the great sacrifice which He Himself,

* See our remarks there.

† See chap. iii. 4—11, and explanation.

‡ Ex. xl. 38.

as the everlasting High-priest after the order of Melchizedek, came to offer once for ever, and to enter Jehovah's sanctuary with His own precious blood, and make atonement and propitiation for the sins of His redeemed Bride. Though He now appeared in a body of flesh, He was not less "the brightness of Jehovah's glory, and the express image of His person," and His Bride could say, "He dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." It is of that manifestation of the Son of God to His Church that Solomon (who so clearly saw the Son of God descending from and ascending back into heaven, Prov. xxx. 1—5), speaking by the Spirit of God of His coming "in the flesh to His temple," made the Bride exclaim again, "His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraceth me." And this was now no figurative language as that of David when he says, "The Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them"—it was no more a spiritual image like that; "as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so is the Lord round about His people," but now it was a wonderful and literal reality. Such was the everlasting love of God to immortal souls, such the Divine compassion of our Saviour over sinners, that He left for a while heaven's inconceivable splendour, and the bosom of His Father, and came down to embrace His Church, to feed His flock, to bear the lambs in His bosom, to open the eyes of the blind, to heal the sick and wounded, to raise the dead, and at last to lay down His life for His sheep. Those souls especially which His father gave unto Him while on earth, those favoured children of the kingdom who were with and about Him, who saw His glory and power in all the miracles He performed, who drank so freely of His Divine love, who witnessed His celestial magnificence on the mount of transfiguration, and whom He kept, cherished, and loved to the end, they could surely say, "His left hand is under my head, and His right hand embraceth me." But this was and must be even now the language of every child of God in whose heart the love of Christ is planted, and whose body has become a temple of the Holy Spirit. Every one of His redeemed flock feels that Christ is in him, with him and around him, even according to His parting promise to His Bride.

4. I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem. . . .
 Wherefore should ye stir up,
 And why should ye disturb this love,
 Until it hath (or shall) become perfect !

There are two features in the style and form of this verse which materially distinguish this adjuration of the Bride to the daughters of Jerusalem, from those addressed to them on two former occasions. In chap. ii. 7, and in chap. iii. 5, the Bride was reported as having charged the daughters of Jerusalem, or the Gentile nations, not to stir up or disturb the love before it should be ripe, or before it had accomplished the covenant conditions (see explanation of figure and substance on chap. ii. 7). In both the former occasions the Bride took the hinds and roes of the field to witness, according to the ancient eastern custom, as was explained on the occurrence of this figure, but in this verse they appear no more. On both the former occasions it is אַם תִּזְעִירי (Im tairu) "If ye stir up," and also in the next phrase (Im teoreru) "If ye disturb," in a threatening and warning form, but in this verse it is מַה תִּזְעִירי (Mah tairu), "Wherefore, or to what purpose, should ye disturb," as also in the second repeated phrase (Umah teoreru), "And why, or to what purpose, should ye disturb?" in a reasoning, inviting, and counselling form. The reason of these changes is as evident as important.

The two former charges were placed, one, after the manifestation of the Divine Majesty of the Covenant Angel, and of His love to His Church on the day of the dedication of the tabernacle at the foot of Mount Sinai; and the other after the manifestation of the Lord on the dedication of the temple of Solomon. On both these occasions the old covenant was in all its vigour (indeed on the former it was quite new and in the freshness of youth), when the Church had yet to remain for centuries confined to "the people of the God of Abraham," who were "to dwell alone and not to be numbered among the other nations," and when a holy jealousy on the part of that Church for her exclusive rights, privileges, and promises was necessary to her purity and spiritual welfare and therefore repeatedly recommended and encouraged by the prophets of God. It was then that the "royal priesthood," the only holy and chosen nation, charged the heathen

nations to stand afar off, beyond the insurmountable partition wall, declaring to them openly and decidedly that they had no part in her covenant with the God of Jacob, nor any claim to partake of its blessings and privileges. These defying declarations of Israel to the alien Gentile nations, Solomon clothed in a poetical dress, and made it appear in the form of an adjuration, produced by jealousy, and nourished by a fear of rivalry. And the validity of the charge being intended to last for a long period, the "roes and hinds of the field were called to be witnesses," figures beautifully adapted to the poetical construction of this Song of love.

But the circumstances and condition of that Church have entirely changed at the period to which the present passage of our Song refers. Not only was the daughter of Zion no more jealous of the daughters of Jerusalem, not only did she entertain no fear of rivalry on the part of the Gentile nations, but she had already offered up the most ardent prayers on their behalf. She supplicated the speedy arrival of the promised Shiloh, to remove the partition wall, and the covering veil from the nations, and to go forth into the fields and villages and gather those precious plants among the daughters of Jerusalem that were knocking at the door for communion. Why, then, does she still adjure those daughters of Jerusalem, for whose incorporation and salvation she prayed. Ah, it is now only about a matter of time and privilege, a most glorious privilege, of which, however, the Bride had every reason to be jealous with an holy jealousy. It was to her that the glorious privilege was promised of introducing the "virgins in rich attire" to her Lord, and of "leading them with joy and exultation into the king's palaces." It was the ancient Church that was appointed to carry the light of the gospel among the Gentiles; and it is for this privilege that she pleads in this verse; and how could she be indifferent to it?*

* The true and faithful Church of God, collectively as the universal Church, and separately in the different communities, or Christian Churches or Congregations, always was, is, and will be watching over, and greedy and avaricious of her privileges; and the more she is so the more blessed, vigorous, and flourishing she is. Search the history of those once flourishing but now entirely ruined and lifeless bodies (no matter if they still call themselves Churches or not), and you will invariably find that a relaxation in watching over their privileges indi-

chapter, when she prayed her Beloved to come down and go forth with her into the fields and villages, where there was a rich harvest of precious plants and aromatic flowers (willing, believing, waiting and praying souls among the Gentiles), awaiting them at the very gates, where "new and old" plants were waiting for His coming to water them with His Spirit, she takes good care of her privileges, saying, "I have laid up for Thee," *i.e.*, I have prepared them, I have taught them to know Thee, to wait and pray for Thy coming, but I have reserved for myself the privilege of gathering them for Thee, of making them to Thee a glorious crown.

The Lord Jesus on His coming not only approved, but encouraged that holy jealousy in His disciples, whom He came to enrich with blessings and privileges, but not to deprive them of any; "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."* And

created the first symptoms of decay, and that indifference and entire freezing followed until the buried talent was taken from them, and they were cast into outer darkness. In our day, alas, there circulates in the Christian world a very dangerous and virulent poison in the shape of a false, blind, and anti-evangelical charity. Alas, it is so called by those who do not understand the value, character, strictness, seriousness, and operation of the real celestial charity which bled on the cross for sinners. That Divine charity invites the sinner to repentance and salvation, but never flatters him as long as he is in the gall of bitterness. She stretches forth her loving arms, and offers to pour heavenly balm into the wounds of fallen and ruined men, but if they deny their wound she tells them promptly and plainly that they will perish, eternally perish, if they are not thoroughly healed. She reaches her hand to every repenting child of Adam, no matter what he was before if he be now at the foot of the cross, but she has *no communion* with the sons of Belial, though she repeatedly reminds them with tears that except they repent and be regenerated they will never see light, but perish in darkness. In one word, Evangelical charity invites sinners to enter the strait gate, to take up the cross and follow Christ, but never does she, in order to please them, cast down her own cross and follow them on the broad way that leads to perdition. Woe unto those who, led astray by that monster which some falsely call charity in our day, make concessions to human weakness, or rather wickedness, with regard to the gospel conditions of salvation and their own Christian privileges, thus selling their birthright not to a Jacob, but to an Esau, whom the Lord hates; and while they erroneously think to do good to the children of darkness, backsliders, rationalists, and infidels by reaching to them the hand of fellowship, they only harden them and ruin themselves. Will not the children of God take Matt. xxiii. as an example, will they not learn from their Master what to promise unto him that believeth, and what to say unto him who believeth not?

* Matt. x. 5, 6.

why? because the exclusive privileges of the Old Covenant Church were not to be abrogated in whole, or any particular point, a single moment before the time. As long as the veil of the temple remained untorn, the Gentiles had no part in the covenant and its blessings and privileges. It was not until He said, "It is finished," until His precious blood was sprinkled, and the veil torn, that the light dawned on those who had sat long in darkness and in the shadow of death, when the risen Saviour said unto His disciples, "Go and preach the gospel unto every creature;" but when He was yet officially among His disciples there could be no question in regard to the Gentiles. When He entered into conversation with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, it was by chance, and He did nothing beyond paving the way for His Church to bring in Samaria to Him after His return to His Father. When His Church herself interceded on behalf of the Canaanitish woman who vehemently called after Him, we know what resistance He offered to her cries as well as to the intercession of His disciples, what He said and what took place; all this was to preserve entire and to the last moment the exclusive privileges of His ancient Church until the great sacrifice was offered, and the new and living way consecrated, and then it was again the exclusive privilege of His Bride to put shoes on her feet and gird her loins and go forth and invite the waiting daughters of Jerusalem to come and enter the open sanctuary of their common Lord and Saviour.

The Bride, therefore, on the coming of her Lord, again exhorted the knocking daughters of Jerusalem to exercise a little more patience, now that the "Desire of all nations" had come into His temple and embraced His Bride, and instructed her regarding her future mission and destiny, to wait now until the "love be made perfect," yea, and "strong as death" on the cross, for as soon as the Lamb of God was offered, and the Captain of salvation made perfect by sufferings, "everlasting righteousness" brought in, and the most holy anointed by the blood of sprinkling and by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the temple of God, the Church, she would herself go forth and invite and lead them into the open sanctuary by the new and consecrated way. The reader needs only to reconsider verse 4, and to compare it with the other two passages of the same nature to see that

it is, as it were, interrupted in the middle, as if the Bride, having begun to address to the daughters of Jerusalem her usual form of adjuration, suddenly stops, remembering that there existed now no reason for her to take that precaution, because the daughters of Jerusalem had now no reason or interest to be jealous ; as it was only a question of a short time till all needful preparations should be made, when she would herself introduce them to her Beloved, and therefore she changes her former tone of threatening by adjuration, into calm counsel and reasoning. When overwhelmed, as it were, by the new manifestation of love from her Divine Lord, and when she again began as it were in a fit of jealousy, to say, " I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem," . . . she suddenly stops, and, instead of continuing as she did twice before, to call her " roes and hinds of the field" to witness should these daughters of Jerusalem dare to stir up or disturb that love, she gives a reasoning turn to her address, saying, " Wherefore should ye stir up, and why or to what purpose should ye disturb this love until, or ere it become perfect ?"—as if she had said, " Indeed, I need not now take the same precautionary measures as I did on former occasions ; for now I have prayed myself for your speedy deliverance and salvation, and with ardent desire have waited for His coming, to prepare the way, and for my commission to go forth and bring you into the open palaces of my King who is soon to be our common Saviour. It is therefore your own advantage not to disturb this love by impatience or complaints, or in any other way, but to wait patiently until it be perfected by the death and resurrection of the Testator, when your lines shall fall in the same pleasant places as mine, when you shall be brought into the same bond of the new and everlasting Covenant, to the same " heavenly Zion, to the same companies of angels, to the same blood of sprinkling, to the same Lord and Redeemer."

Now, dear reader, here ends the third part of our Song. It began with the scenes at the foot of Mount Sinai ; it has recorded the journeys of the Bride or Church of God through the wilderness, over Jordan into Palestine. It has exhibited her prosperity and calamity, her backslidings and repentance, her dark nights and brilliant sunshine, her tears and sighs, her rejoicings and exultation. It has registered

her behaviour in Babylon, and her influence on the Gentile nations, her return to Jerusalem, her noble efforts in rearing her new sanctuary from among the heaps of ruins, and her conduct while a "prisoner of hope," until the angel of the Covenant, who once surrounded her with a pillar of cloud and fire, came into His temple in a body of flesh to accomplish this great plan of salvation, to fulfil the law for her and make it honourable, and then to remove that severe schoolmaster by introducing a New Covenant of perfect faith, light, and love, and to seal it up with His own blood, and open the new, living, and consecrated way into Jehovah's sanctuary through His broken body, as well as to demolish the partition wall, to tear asunder the separating vail, and thus allow sinners of all nations and tongues to come and partake of the sure mercies of David, and enter the number of His redeemed children. The Bride saw His coming and rejoiced exceedingly, and exclaimed, "His left hand is under my head, and His right hand embraced me;" and after having invited and counselled the daughters of Jerusalem patiently to wait until all should be accomplished on Calvary, she stops, leaving to the Evangelists the privilege of recording at large what they have seen and heard of the word of life from the Prince of Life. The *conclusion* of this Song will give us the short interview of the risen Saviour with His New Testament Bride.

CONCLUSION.

ARGUMENT OF THE LAST TEN VERSES, FORMING THE CONCLUSION OF THE SONG.

(Vv. 5, 6.) The risen Saviour addresses His Church (His disciples) in the mountain of Galilee, and in other places, and on other occasions (where and when they met after His resurrection and before His ascension), in most pathetic and touching words of warning, exhortation, promise, and consolation. (V. 7.) The Church promises perfect obedience, and eternal attachment to her Beloved. (V. 8.) The Church (or the disciples) asks her Saviour how she is to introduce the Gospel to the rebels and unbelieving Jews of Jerusalem (under the figure of a "breastless little sister"), or what prospect there was of their accepting of the invitation? (V. 9.) The Saviour tells her that He will find good employment for those of the "little sister" (of the unbelieving Jews) that would be converted unto Him, and that he would put the hardened rebels in such a strait (or confined) position that they should not be able to hinder the work. (V. 10.) The triumphant language of the converted "little sister." (Vv. 11, 12.) The marriage contract (or the New Covenant conditions) between the Lord Jesus and His united Church composed of Jews and Gentiles. (V. 13.) Messiah's last farewell address to His Church. (V. 14.) Her answer.

THE RISEN SAVIOUR.

5. Who is this (or, she) that cometh up from the wilderness
 Leaning upon (or, joining company with) her Beloved?
 Under the citron-tree have I awakened thee:
 There thy mother hath plighted thee—
 There hath plighted *thee* she that bare thee.*

* מִיתְרַפֶּקֶת (Mithrapeketh), which must be the *Hithpael* constructed from the verb רָפַק (Raphak), occurs only in this place. The same word in Arabic رَفَق (Raphak), signifies *courtesy*, or the courting of companionship; and رَفِيق (Rephik), "a companion, a partner, a friend." &c. According to the construction of this word in our passage and context it must signify the advancing or coming forth of the Bride from the wilderness, in order to join company with her Beloved. Nor is the particle אַל (Al) in our way; for it often signifies "with, together with,

6. Set me as a seal upon thy heart—

As a seal upon thine arms ;

Seeing that love is as strong as death,

Jealousy is as cruel (or hard, stubborn) as the grave ;

Her blazings are blazings of fire—

A spreading flame of the Almighty (*i.e.*, kindled by).*

The attentive reader will have observed all along that even in the historical part of the Song the sacred author chose only the chief points of the greatest events as connecting topics in the continuation of his work, and that he could not and did not enter into historical particulars. Much more must this be the case in the prophetic portion of this Song, and especially with regard to a subject so vast as the transactions of Messiah on earth during the few but eventful years of His ministration in the midst of His Church. As soon, therefore, as the Song had introduced the Covenant Angel into His temple, and celebrated the joy of the Bride at the coming of the Bridegroom in the form of a brother, it paused a while, spread a veil of silence over all that had passed, from His coming to His sufferings, agonies, indignities, and expiatory death as the Lamb of God. In the 5th verse He is again introduced as the triumphant Saviour, as the conquering Prince of heaven, who, having “overcome the world” and the powers of darkness by His death and resurrection, now meets and addresses His Bride before leaving her, on His return to heaven, to prepare the place for her, to send her the Comforter, and to sit down on the right

along with,” &c., as Gen. xxxii. 12; Exod. xxxv. 22; Lev. iv. 11; Num. xxviii. 15; especially Is. xiv. 1, where it is used in the very same sense as in this verse.

שָׁמַח חִבְלַתְּחָה אִמִּיָּךְ (Shamah chiblatcha imecha), “There thy mother hath plighted thee,” *i.e.*, given thee as a pledge unto me, or rather pledged her word and promise to give thee unto me (in marriage). So the word חִבַּל signifies, Exod. xxii. 26; Deut. xxiv. 6, 17; Job xxii. 6, xxiv. 3; and Nehem. i. 17.

חִבַּלְנוּ לְךָ חָבֹל (Chavol chavalnu lach), “We are greatly pledged unto thee,” or exceedingly much indebted unto thee, *i.e.*, for benefits received, and sins committed.

* רֶשֶׁפֶת (Resheph), “a blaze,” a “flame,” or “flash of lightning” (so Deut. xxxii. 24; Job. v. 7; Ps. lxxviii. 48; Hab. iii. 5). שְׁלֵהֶבֶת יְהוָה (Shalheveth yah), “a stream, volume, or torrent of flames, kindled by the Lord,” as Ezek. xx. 47; “a conflagration of flames,” Job xv. 30.

hand of the Power as a Mediator and universal Governor until the consummation of all things. Now we have to consider, first, the meaning of these two verses containing His address to the Bride; second, to search in the New Testament for the fulfilment and illustration of this address; and third, to explain the figures employed.

“Who is this (or she) that cometh up from the wilderness leaning upon (or joining company with) her Beloved?” At the very beginning of the relation of the Covenant-Angel with His Bride, we find them both in a wilderness, where, at the foot of Mount Sinai, she pledged herself to Him, saying, “All that the Lord God hath said we shall do, and be obedient.” That pledge was confirmed by a covenant, and ratified by sacrifice and the sprinkling of blood. Regarding that fact the Lord Himself bears her testimony in various places, saying, “I remember thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.”* The reason why the Lord espoused and led His Bride in a wilderness for the space of forty years is given by Moses: “And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, . . . that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live. . . . Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought; where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint. Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end.”† Again, by a late prophet: “I did know thee (or espouse thee) in the wilderness, in a land of great drought. But when they fed and were filled (*i.e.*, in the land of promise), yea, they were filled, and their heart was exalted, and so they have forgotten me. Therefore am I become as a lion unto them, as a leopard by the way will

* Jer. ii. 2.

† Deut. viii. 2, 3, 15, 16.

I observe them.”* These passages speak for themselves. The Lord first espoused His Church in the wilderness of Sinai, where he led her forty years to prepare her for the land of promise, where she was to find rest. Into that land of promise he brought her; but there she repeatedly fell into revolt and transgression, was severely punished, and several times restored again. She was once driven back into the “wilderness of the nations,” who led her captive, and then restored after seventy years’ desolation; and we know her deplorable history down to the period when the Covenant-Angel came to abolish the Old, and make the New Covenant.

But what were and are the conditions of the Covenant Church? They are *a wilderness and no rest* in this world, and in this life, and *eternal rest and no wilderness* in the future world, and in the life everlasting. To take up the cross and follow Him, to enter the strait gate and walk in the narrow way, were the first and principal conditions of the Lord to His New Testament Church, and to every one wishing to follow Him into the rest that “remaineth still for the people of God;” to be strangers and pilgrims on earth, having here no abiding city, but, like Abraham the father of the faithful, looking forward “to a city that hath foundations, whose founder and builder is God.” These conditions were foretold to the New Testament Church by Old Testament prophets: “Therefore, behold, I will allure her (or persuade her), and bring her into the wilderness, and speak to her heart [*i.e.*, reason with her]). And I will give her her vineyards from thence (*i.e.*, even her temporal blessings she shall only enjoy as in a wilderness), and the valley of Achor (of trouble and distress) for a door of hope, and there she shall be humbled (observe, there is no ‘singing’ in the Hebrew text, though erroneously in the common version) as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. . . . And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies; and I will betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord.”† This pilgrimage for life in the wilderness was appointed not only for the Christian Church in general, and for every Christian pilgrim in particular, as the “furnace of affliction”

* Hos. xiii. 5–7.

† Hos. ii. 14–20.

in which all the members of Christ are purified and made perfect by sufferings, but even for the refractory portion of Israel, who, because of their iniquities, were "all concluded in unbelief," for a long time, and whose refinement and conversion was equally foretold to take place in the wilderness. "At that time (*i.e.* Messianic time), saith the Lord, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people. Thus saith the Lord, the people that escaped from the sword found grace in the wilderness, whither Israel went to seek him rest (the last phrase is sadly disfigured in the common version.) The Lord appeared unto me from afar (*i.e.* showed me this vision regarding a distant future), *saying*, Yet, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee (*i.e.*, into this wilderness to chastise and correct thee, to convert thee and then give thee rest.)* The following will cast light on the former passage: "And I will bring you into the wilderness of the nations, and there will I plead with you face to face; like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord God. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant."† In the twelfth chapter of Revelation, the "woman," that brought forth the "manchild," was persecuted by the "dragon," fled into the "wilderness," &c., is another collective representation of the great fact, that the cradle of the Christian Church is the "wilderness;" her pilgrimage begins, continues, and ends in the "wilderness." Every individual Christian, from the first day of his conversion to God in Christ, finds himself in a wilderness of difficulties, dangers, trials, and sufferings, in the midst of vipers and dragons, in a land of great drought where there is no water. As Israel of old was first brought out from Egypt to Mount Sinai, where that Church entered the Covenant, and then began her march through the wilderness to the land of promise, so the New Covenant Church, in every individual member, is first brought out from Egypt, from the enslaving vanities of this world, from the chains of passion and corrupt nature, to the cross, where she enters the everlasting covenant sealed with the precious blood of the Saviour, and then she begins her pilgrimage through the wilderness of this world,

* Jer. xxxi. 1-3.

† Ezek. xx. 35-37.

to the land of promise, always accompanied by her Beloved as was Israel of old by the Angel in the cloud, only that her land of promise is not a temporal but a spiritual Zion, a heavenly Jerusalem

But where and when did that wilderness begin for the Church of Christ? and where and when did her going up from that wilderness begin? That wilderness began at Gethsemane, when the Shepherd was taken and smitten, and the sheep dispersed in the wilderness of persecution, calumny, and sufferings, according to the Saviour's prediction about the beginning of their sorrows: "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you; and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake."* "But before all these (*i.e.* the destruction of Jerusalem), they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts not to meditate before what ye shall answer: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay, nor resist . . . And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. But there shall not an hair of your head perish. In your patience possess ye your souls."† Here we see that the Christian Church was at the very dawn of her spiritual life brought into the midst of the "wilderness," that her pilgrimage is a continual *going up out of that wilderness* towards heaven, and that she is not alone during that pilgrimage, but always in company with her Beloved.

Now it remains for us to point out the time and place when and where the Church thus brought at once into the wilderness again found her Beloved; for it is certain that in Gethsemane she was separated from Him and lost Him for a season. On the night of agony Jesus foretold to His disciples His approaching sufferings and ignominious death, adding: "But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee."‡ Accordingly the Angel said unto the two Marys: "Go quickly, and tell the disciples, that He is risen from the dead; and behold, He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him; lo, I have told you."§

* Matth. xxix. 9.

‡ Matth. xxvi. 32; comp. Mark xiv. 28.

† Luke xxi. 12—19.

§ Matth. xxviii. 7.

As they went to execute their message, "Jesus met them, saying, All hail Be not afraid; go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me."* "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain, where Jesus had appointed them, and when they saw Him they worshipped Him."† Here then we have the first flash of light cast upon the passage in our Song—Jerusalem, where the Lord was crucified, became now the wilderness foretold unto the disciples. Out of that wilderness they went to a mountain in Galilee to meet their Beloved, the risen Saviour, who, while sending them now into the wilderness of the world at large, assured them of His gracious though invisible presence in all their wanderings: And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.‡

We have thus reached the highway for the explanation of our passage. We have seen that the first expression of the risen Saviour in ordering His Church was fulfilled when the disciples went up from their wilderness (Jerusalem) to meet Him in the mountain in Galilee. The separation of the Divine master and His disciples was not a long one, but it was a most painful, a dark and gloomy separation for both. During the short interval of a few days the Master underwent a most cruel, agonising, and ignominious death, and the disciples, enveloped in a dark cloud of despondency, doubt, and fear, must have suffered agonies which no pen can ever describe. Cast ashore alive, after having been engulfed in the deepest abyss, master and disciples meet again, and the risen Prince of Life, serenely casting a smile upon the disciples worshipping at His feet, says to them, "Who is this (or she) that cometh up out of the wilderness to join company with her Beloved?" The beauty and meaning of both image and substance are too clear to need further explanation. But closely connected with this is the next expression, "Under the citron-tree have I awakened thee" (or "raised thee up," *i.e.* as out of sleep), and what else can be intended now by that "citron-tree" but the cross of Calvary! On that sad night in Gethsemana the disciples, sunk under heaviness, and the agonized Lamb of God, ready to be slain for them, found them several times asleep, and said, "Can ye not watch an hour?" It

* Matth. xxviii. 9, 10. † Matth. xxviii. 16, 17. ‡ Matth. xxviii. 20.

is certain, also, that they soon fell into a deep sleep of doubt and unbelief, as soon as they saw their wonder-working Master fallen into the hands of the wicked, and led away to be judged. It was then that they dispersed in the "wilderness;" it was then that the brave Peter thrice denied His Master. But they awoke at the cross, when they saw that if their Master proved himself to be the Son of God by His life and mighty deeds, He did it more so by His death. The dying Jesus said to the disciple whom He loved, "Behold thy mother!" and did not John awake by these words under the cross! words which, when weighed and considered in connection with the place and circumstances and the condition of Him who uttered them, are powerful enough to animate a stone. The thief was awakened, converted, and saved at the cross of Christ.

When some of the bystanders witnessed both the serenity, patience, and dying love which the slain Lamb manifested before breathing His last, and how heaven and earth combined in expressions of horror and woe, the moment He expired, they went away smiting their breasts; and the centurion "glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man ("Truly this man was the Son of God," Mark xvi. 39). . . . And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off beholding these things."* It was under this citron-tree, under the cross of Christ, that the "just and good man," Joseph of Arimathea, was awakened from his sleep, for though he was one of those "who waited for the kingdom of God," and though he "was also a disciple," he had not courage enough hitherto to confess Jesus openly "for fear of the Jews." But now he boldly and fearlessly demanded the body of Pilate, and being a counsellor he obtained it, and openly rendered to it the greatest sepulchral honour possible. The same was the case with Nicodemus,—he seems to have been asleep during the life of Jesus, though he came to see Him by night. But he was awakened under the citron-tree, where he saw that He whom he once styled "A teacher come from God," must be the "Son of God," the promised Saviour of the world; and therefore he now came boldly and joined his brother Joseph, who like

* Luke xxiii. 44—49.

himself belonged to the counsel called Sanhedrim, and brought an hundred pound weight of myrrh and aloes, and they together "took the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices," and laid it into the new stone sepulchre.*

In the second chapter of our Song, the Bride compared her Beloved to a "citron-tree," under whose shadow she sat down with delight, and whose fruit was sweet to her palate. But it was on the cross that that "citron-tree" developed all its vigour, spread forth its branches to the uttermost parts of the earth, inviting weary pilgrims of all nations and tongues to come and take shelter under its shadow. It was there that its delicious fruits ripened to perfection, when "the Captain of our salvation was made perfect by sufferings." There the Prince of Life both tasted and conquered death for us. There the eternal High-priest offered the great sacrifice, and prepared for us the precious blood of sprinkling. There all was finished in the plan of our salvation. There the good Shepherd gave His life for His flock. There He became the real "Tree of Life" to all those that believe in Him. There He opened the fountain of living and refreshing waters to His pilgrims who march towards Zion through this dreary and terrible wilderness. There He spread His benignant shade over His Church to cover her from the scorching sun of God's wrath, and there He made for her a vast provision of the delightful fruits of His righteousness. "In that day shall the Branch of the Lord (or, 'Jehovah the Branch') be for victory (so צֶדֶק signifies Num. xxxi. 7, &c.), and for glory; and the fruit of the earth (*i.e.* the fruit which that Branch will produce on earth) for excellency and splendour to those that shall escape in Israel."† The cross of Christ is also often called "tree,"—"Jesus whom ye slew and hanged on a tree."‡ And one who tasted the fruits of that "tree" said, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Christ," &c.§ Again, "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell; and having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself."||

* Comp. Luke xxiii. 50—53, with John xix. 38—42.

† Is. iv. 2.

‡ Acts v. 30, x. 39, xiii. 29; 1 Peter ii. 24.

§ Gal. vi. 14. || Col. i. 19—22.

Moreover, according to His prediction, Christ was to awaken or to raise from moral sleep His Church under the cross, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life."* "When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he."† "And I if (or when) I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."‡ Such were the results, and such the fruits of Christ's having been lifted up upon the tree, but these results and fruits began to be more abundantly manifested after He had been lifted up or raised from the dead; as the one perfected and finished the other. Regarding this Paul says, "But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."§ "That like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life; for if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection."|| "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by the Spirit that dwelleth in you."¶ "Even when we were dead in sins, he has quickened us together with Christ. . . . And hath raised us up together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."** From the above passages we see in what sense the risen Saviour could have said unto His disciples, "Under the citron-tree have I awakened thee (or, raised thee up from thy deep sleep), and how the Apostle calls that sleep moral death, and the awakening, a quickening or restoration to spiritual life, faith, hope, and activity.

We come now to the second part of our wonderfully comprehensive verse. "There," proceeds the risen Saviour—"There, under the citron-tree"—"There, at the foot of the cross, where I bled for thee"—"There thy mother hath plighted thee" (*i.e.*, to me); "There hath plighted thee she that bare thee." Zion is in this Song, as well as in the prophets at large, styled the mother of the Church, and the

* John iii. 14, 15.

§ Rom. iv. 24, 25.

† John viii. 28.

|| Rom. vi. 4, 5.

** Eph. ii. 5, 6.

‡ John xii. 32.

¶ Rom. viii. 11.

Church "the daughter of Zion." It has already been explained on different occasions, that Zion is the type of the Holy Spirit, as He regenerates sinners into children of the living God, into living members of His Church, and marries them to Christ, or gives them unto Him in covenant. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."* "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body . . . and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."† For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. . . . The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."‡ It is then the same Spirit who assisted Christ in accomplishing His plan of salvation, in offering His great sacrifice in His death and resurrection, that also assists every individual member of His Church to come to Christ after having prepared him according to the preparation of the sanctuary, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God."§ And who applies that precious blood to the sinner's conscience?—who washes and sanctifies him but the self-same Spirit? for "unless a man be born of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." The promise made to the Redeemer was that, "When his soul shall make an offering for sin, he shall see his seed; he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure (literally 'purpose') of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." But all these operations are executed by the Spirit of God, as is clearly seen from the above quoted passages, and nothing is accomplished without Him. Hence the Spirit is represented in this passage of the Song as having plighted the Bride, His daughter, in marriage to the Saviour, even when He bled on the cross, when He paid the price for her with His own life-blood, and she became His inheritance for ever. It was then that Hosea's prophecy was fulfilled, "And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and

* Rom. vii. 4.

† 1 Cor. xii. 13.

‡ Rom. viii. 14—16.

§ Heb. ix. 14.

in loving-kindness, and in mercies ;” for it was on the cross of Christ, that “mercy and truth met together ; righteousness and peace kissed each other.” And while the “Testator” satisfied God’s justice in paying the ransom for His Bride, the Holy Spirit was there as the executor of the Testament, pledging the Bride—to the slain and risen Prince of life.

We proceed now to consider verse sixth, or the second part of the Saviour’s address to His Bride on meeting her in the mountain of Galilee ; and in so doing, we shall first pass in review Ezekiel’s graphic description of the Lord’s former espousals of His O. T. Bride, her condition at that time and His dealings with her. Speaking in the name of the Lord, that prophet says, “And thou wast cast out in the open field in the uncleanness (or pollution) of thy person (or soul) in the day that thou wast born. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee rolling (or weltering) in thine own blood, I said unto thee, In thy blood thou shalt live ; yea, I said unto thee, in thy blood thou shalt live.* . . .

* This is the literal translation of בְּדַמַיִךְ חַיִּי (Bedamayich chayi), “In thy blood thou shalt live”—the sense of which seems to be, “polluted as thou art in sin and uncleanness, abandoned to moral death, and with nothing to recommend thee, still I say, In thy blood thou shalt live,” *i.e.*, even as thou art, “I have found a ransom for thee,” I say, “Deliver from going down into the pit.” The reader will remember the passage in Zechariah, where Joshua the high-priest is represented as covered with “filthy garments,” and “Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.” The Lord on that occasion did not order him first to change his garments, but He declared first, that even as he was now he enjoyed His mighty protection—that he was a burning delivered from the fire.” And then only, when Satan’s mouth was stopped, the Lord ordered Joshua’s garments to be changed. Jesus takes first the sinner even as he is, under His protection, then He washes, cleanses, and sanctifies him by His Holy Spirit, clothes him with celestial ornaments. Such is exactly Ezekiel’s description of the Lord’s dealing with Israel. When He found them in Egypt enslaved, abandoned, and polluted in idolatry and sin, He did not wait till they were worthy of Him, but immediately He said, “In thy blood thou shalt live,” *i.e.*, I will deliver thee even as thou art, and then proceed to wash and cleanse and sanctify thee. On the night of the slaughter of the first-born by the destroying Angel, Israel was not a whit better than the doomed victims, ah, but they had already the protection of the Covenant-Angel, who said, “In thy blood thou shalt live,” and His sign was already on their door-posts, to show that they were His. It was only at Mount Sinai that He begun to work in them, to wash, cleanse, and sanctify them by the sprinkling of the blood of the covenant-sacrifice, by the law and commandments, statutes and precepts which “make wise the simple, enlighten the eyes, rejoice the heart, and convert the soul.” Such is the order followed by Ezekiel in the above passage, as will be seen.

Now, when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, and behold thy time was the time of love, (*i.e.*, when Moses had asked Israel thrice if they were willing and ready to enter the covenant, and they answered thrice, "All that the Lord God hath said we shall do, and be obedient," this signifies "the time of love"); then I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness; yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine. Then washed I thee with water, yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and anointed thee with oil, I clothed thee also with broidered work. . . . And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and ear-rings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown on thine head," &c.*

If such was the case with our Bride at the period of her first espousals at Mount Sinai—if such images were justly employed to describe the deplorable and forlorn condition in which the Lord then found her, and His divine compassion by which He delivered her, washed, cleansed, sanctified, clothed, and adorned her, what language would describe, what images would be sufficiently expressive to depict, the frightful condition of the Church at the moment of the incomprehensible and mysterious manifestation of divine love on the cross of Christ? That Bride, that Church for whom the Covenant-Angel had showed such wonders of compassion at her first espousals at Mount Sinai, as described in the above passage of Ezekiel, what was her condition at the foot of the cross, and before some of her children were again awakened by the fearful and overwhelming scenes they witnessed? After being scorned, scourged, and tortured, the humble Lamb of God was led forth to Calvary, laden with His cross, and even His murderers when they saw it was impossible for Him to bear it from exhaustion and torture, laid one end of it on Simon of Cyrene. A great multitude of that nation regarding whom He once said, "In thy blood thou shalt live," and who had just vociferated, "Crucify him, crucify him," followed Him like a band of ravenous wolves, eager to scorn His agonies, to embitter as much as possible His ignominious death; to heap insults on Him who had healed their maladies, opened the eyes of their blind, and fed their hungry ones with temporal and spiri-

* Ezck xvi., see verses 1—12.

tual bread; and to see Him who wept over Jerusalem nailed to and die on the accursed tree. Those even who once followed Him and witnessed His power and glory, and heard the repeated testimony of heaven regarding Him, have now in part abandoned and denied Him, and those of them who came to witness His agonizing death, stood "afar off," for fear of being recognised and identified as His disciples and followers. Was not that Bride then "weltering in her own blood and in the pollution of her soul," far more than at the time of which the above quoted passage in Ezekiel speaks? Was she not at the foot of the cross far less worthy of the Covenant-Angel's divine love than at the time when she lay prostrate in Egypt under degrading slavery and abominable idolatry? And the Son of God had still power to call legions of Angels to His assistance, to destroy His enemies, to return triumphantly to heaven, and to leave a wicked and wretched world of rebels to perish in their iniquities, and in the filthiness of their sin! But no! the Lamb went to the slaughter without opening His mouth—blood of sprinkling was needed to wash away such criminality and guilt, and His blood alone could do it; and the greater the sin the greater the pardoning love, the more wretched the state of the Bride at the cross, the more glorious the Saviour's dying love. In Egypt, at Mount Sinai, when the Bride was "weltering in her own blood," He said, "In thy blood thou shalt live." On Calvary, when she had committed the additional and horrid crime of shedding her Saviour's innocent blood, He said in addition, "By my blood thou shalt live"—O, what manner of love! "But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."*

It was that wonderful and matchless divine love manifested on the cross—that love which reached maturity and ripened into perfection under the citron tree—that the Holy Spirit revealed unto Solomon, and made him put the words into the mouth of the risen Saviour to His awakened Bride,

* Rom. v. 8—10.

“Set me as a seal upon thy heart—as a seal upon thine arms; seeing that love is as strong as death.” In those days the highest honour conferred by a king on one who merited his favour was to give him a seal of gold with his name, or a jewel with his portrait engraven on it; and which that person wore either suspended by a gold chain upon his heart, or fastened round the arm.* More especially was such a seal given by a princely bridegroom to his bride on the day of espousals, and which she wore till the consummation of their marriage, to remind her always of her absent lover. Jesus was now soon to leave his unworthy but still dear bought and dearly beloved Bride, and return to His Father. He therefore reminds her to set Him and the remembrance of Him, especially as He appeared for her on Golgotha, as a seal upon her heart and arms, to imprint the scene of Calvary on the table of her heart, to wear it as an ornament on her arms. The reason for which is: “Seeing that love is as strong as death,” *i.e.*, the love which she repeatedly adjured the daughters of Jerusalem “not to interfere with or disturb until it should be perfect,” had now ripened to all perfection on the cross, under the “citron tree,” where it proved as strong as death; “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends; ye are my friends, if ye do whatever I command you.”† She had now, therefore, nothing to fear from any quarter, and nothing to awaken doubt, but only to think that since her Beloved had poured out His soul in death for her, it was utterly impossible that He should now forget or forsake her, as long as she should preserve his memory as a seal upon her heart.

At the same time, He informs her that having now bought her with His life-blood—and paid the matchless price for her—jealousy had now arisen on His side, and that it was “cruel (or stubborn) as the grave,” and that woe unto him who should provoke it. “For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?”† “For if we sin wilfully after having received the knowledge of the

* See Jer xxii. 24.; Hag. ii. 23; Esther iii. 10. † John xv. 13.
 ‡ Heb. ii. 2, 3.

truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses : of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace? For we know Him that hath said, *Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompence*, saith the Lord. . . . It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."* It is thus clear that in this address of the risen Saviour to His Bride is exhibited His divine love towards her—love now ripened and perfected above all her own expectations—and also her new duties and pledges toward Him. And while He tells her to keep His benignant image before the eyes of her soul and upon her heart continually, He at the same time reminds her of the awful consequences of infidelity, of the devouring flames which will avenge it under the New Covenant dispensation, sealed with His own blood.

Under the Old dispensation the Lord was also represented as a jealous God, who would by no means suffer any rival in the heart of His Church, but then Israel's infidelities and backslidings were severely punished, though Israel did not cease for all that to be the only covenanted people of God, and as soon as they repented they entered again into divine favour, as the following passage testifies : " Say unto them, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? Would not that land be greatly polluted? (*i.e.*, wherein such things are practised) ; but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers ; yet, return again to me, saith the Lord."† Such was indeed the case under the covenant ratified with the typical blood of bulls and goats, but it is not so under the covenant ratified and sealed with the precious blood of the Son of God, when the conditions become inviolable, " jealousy as cruel and stubborn as the grave," infidelity at once fatal, punishment irrevocable, and a verdict of repudiation unchangeable ; " for it is impossible for those who were

* Heb. x. 26—31.

† Jer. iii. 1.

once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they have crucified to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame.* Woe, then, unto the false prophets of our day! Woe to the *peace*, *peace* preaching hirelings who proclaim charity, love, and pardon to spiritual harlots who have multitudes of idols and masters besides the Lord, whose name they only bear for double condemnation! Woe unto them who invite unconverted men, living in their sins, to approach the holy table, to partake of the symbols of his precious blood and broken body, to renew solemnly a covenant which they daily break and trample under foot, by leaguering themselves with the devil and his delusions, selling themselves to the world, to Mammon, and to fleshly lusts! Woe unto those who see in that mysterious sacrament, in that blood-sealed covenant, a remedy for unconverted sinners, and nothing but love for spiritual adulterers, while the Apostle declared it "judgment and condemnation" for them, and Jesus says that "jealousy is cruel, stubborn, and unpitiable as the grave," and that a flame kindled by the Almighty Himself shall devour those that provoke that jealousy! Soon, alas, victimiser and victim, false prophet and false disciple, will find that what has proved an ocean of love, grace, and peace to the children of the Kingdom, to the real, faithful, and sanctified Bride of the Lamb, will prove a lake of devouring fire and torment to them throughout eternity! When Moses in his last sublime Song speaks of the Messianic days, of the fearful punishment of refractory Israel (and no less of the doom of those of whom Paul speaks in the above quoted passages), he says in the name of God: "They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities; and I will move them to jealousy with those that are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains."† The same is an-

* Heb. vi. 4—6.

† Deut. xxxii. 21, 22.

nounced in this verse of the Song, in the warning of the risen Saviour to His Church, that after the love strong as death which was manifested on her behalf, jealousy was as cruel, as stubborn as death; and that the flames which that jealousy will produce, will be a torrent of flames, an awful conflagration kindled by the Almighty.

Be it observed, finally, that though none of the four Evangelists gives us *a full account* of the risen Saviour's conversations with His disciples, it is certain that they must have been fraught with important instruction—He must have rehearsed many facts, doctrines, counsels, and prophecies regarding the future of which He had spoken to them before, and showed them their signification and fulfilment. Hence we cannot expect to find in our Song (as a prophecy for a distant future) more than an allusion to the risen Saviour's address to His Bride, and the general substance of that address. Matthew mentions only the meeting of Jesus with His disciples in the mountain of Galilee, and the *great commission*, which He gave them there, but no other particulars of their intercourse. Mark omits their meeting at Galilee, but tells us that when Jesus met His disciples, "He upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen."* He mentions likewise the two disciples who saw Him on their way to Emmaus, but He leaves the particulars of their interview to Luke. The latter tells us that, in the person of an unknown traveller, the Saviour said unto them, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."† Alas, we have no particulars of these precious explanations of Scripture by the risen Saviour. Nor have we any particulars about His next meeting with all the disciples, only that He ate bread with them," and said unto them, "These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me. Then opened

* Mark xvi. 14.

† Luke xxiv. 25—27.

he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures. And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day.* Now, without alluding at present to the account which John gives of the Lord's last interview with His disciples, as we shall soon have occasion to do, it is sufficiently clear that the two verses of the Song just explained contain the sum and substance of that interview; and that though particulars are given neither in the Song nor in the Evangelists, the aim and bearing of both (the peculiar circumstances considered) are quite the same.

THE CHURCH.

7. Many waters shall not be able to quench that love,
 Neither shall the floods drown it (or wash it away);
 If a man would give all the wealth of his house for
 that love,
 He would be utterly contemned (or despised).

As the two preceding verses were shown to contain the language of the Bridegroom, so can this be none other but that of the Bride; for we ask, What is the perishing wealth of man to Him who at the very outset of His active career despised the devil's offer to give Him all the kingdoms and principalities of this world if He would only once bow His head before him? What are all the riches of this world to Him who in everlasting love laid down His life for His Church? And what was now the value of anything esteemed *dear* or *precious* by us, to Him who said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth?" This verse must therefore contain the language of the Bride, who was now to gird her loins and go forth into the wilderness of this world to preach the Gospel of a crucified Redeemer, and be exposed to persecution, temptations, and all manner of sufferings and privations. It is for her that the Saviour prayed so ardently to the Father, saying, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. . . . As thou hast sent me into the

* Luke xxiv. 44—46.

world, even so have I also sent them into the world.”* It is she who needed to be confirmed in her faith, and to keep constantly in mind the invaluable riches of “that love” which her risen Bridegroom showed her was “strong as death.” It is she who now maintains that whatever may be her condition in the world, in whatever circumstances she may find herself during her pilgrimage on earth, she would never forget the preciousness and the inestimable value of that death-strong and blood-sealed love-- that all the mighty waters of afflictions and calamities, all the foaming waves of adversity and persecution, all the infernal streams which the enraged devil and his armies may pour upon her, and all the temptations of riches and snares of honours, to which she may be exposed, will not be able to quench that holy flame of pure, divine, and spiritual love which the Almighty had now kindled in her heart, after witnessing the dying love of her Beloved for the salvation of her soul—and that there was nothing in this world so valuable, so rich, so precious, and so fascinating as to be able successfully to tempt her heart, or supplant her affections, and turn them away one moment from her Lord and Redeemer. But it is not necessary to seek explanations of this verse after having been so divinely paraphrased by the great Apostle, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”†

Before we leave this assertion of the Bride, and her firm protestations of confirmed, immoveable, and unceasing love, we have one remark to make about that extraordinary man, so prominent for his burning zeal, his pre-eminent love, his dreadful fall, and his wonderful restoration. Simon, son of Jonas, when Christ asked His disciples who they thought

* John xvii. 15—18.

† Rom. viii. 35--39.

He was, was foremost in answering, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," and he received great praise from the Lord. Shortly after, he was foremost in ignorance and daring when he "rebuked" his master, because He said that He was to be put to death and to rise again; and received the reprimand, "Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of man." On the fatal night when Jesus said that soon they would all be offended in Him, Peter was the foremost in saying, "Though all be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended." Soon after he was the foremost to deny Him thrice, and again in an instant his heart is pierced by the look of the now bound and condemned Lamb of God, and he melts into bitter tears. O what a strange mixture in the heart of a convinced but only half-converted man! and such was Peter before the outpouring of the Spirit made him what he was intended for. What a mixture of strength and weakness, of faith and doubt, of wisdom and ignorance, of burning zeal and backwardness, of courage and fear, of boldness and tenderness! And still what but an inward irresistible love to Christ brought him into the palace of the high-priest? Could he not have kept into some dark hiding place, as did the others? And what but love and attachment brought him first to the grave? Ah, but that love had to be confirmed, sealed up, and engraven on his heart by the Holy Spirit, before it became strong enough to brave death, and to scorn the mighty waters passing over its head. Even before it was a real love, but a floating, imperfect love. Having always come so easily out of his heart to his tongue, the threatening "floods" and "many waters" washed it away before it had acquired strength. But then all these heavy and severe lessons made at last a strong impression on his heart. When on His third appearance to His disciples, the risen Saviour asked him, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" he no more made strong assertions, built on his own high opinion of his strength, but making his Divine Master the Judge of his heart, he said, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." When Jesus repeated the question for the third time—not to try his patience, but to teach him it—he said "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." Now the Lord gave him to

understand the reason of his repeating to him that question thrice? That his love, too, must soon be death-proof—that there was no more time for him to gird himself and escape danger, but that, in feeding the lambs confided to him as an Apostle, he must face death daily, and at last stretch forth his hands and embrace it; for this was the will of his Master, that he should “follow Him.” This conversation of the Lord with Peter was intended as a lesson for all the disciples present, as was always the case, and our allusion to it is to point it out as another illustration of these three verses of our Song.

THE CHURCH,

(OR THE DISCIPLES TO THE RISEN SAVIOUR.)

8. We have a little sister,
 And she hath no breasts;
 What shall we do for our sister
 In the day that she shall be spoken for?

MESSIAH.

9. If she be a wall,
 We shall build on her a palace of silver;
 But if she be a door,
 We shall inclose (or fasten) her with a board of cedar.

Here we have a metaphor within a metaphor; for question and answer are both enclosed within a double shell of figurative figures if we may use such an expression. The task before us is not only to strip the kernel of its double shell, but to discover to what sort of fruit it belongs when stripped. It is comparatively easy to perceive that the breastless “little sister” must signify either a portion of the ancient Church, or of humanity at large, to whom the Gospel was now to be preached—who was now to be invited along with other virgins to come and be introduced to the Bridegroom, as is clear from the question, “What shall we do for our little sister in the day that she shall be spoken for?” indicating that she was by no means to be neglected, but

also invited to come, but who was not judged ripe for the purpose because she had no faith, and none of the qualities required to make her worthy of being introduced to the great King by an eternal covenant. If, therefore, there be any difficulty, as some suppose, it is to fix upon the real party intended, or to ascertain and prove who the "little sister" was? The reader who has attentively followed our interpretation and explanation of the preceding chapter will immediately perceive that we must dismiss the strange opinion of those who make the little breastless or faithless sister signify the Gentile nations (or the Church chosen of all nations and tongues) as erroneous, and as manifestly a glaring absurdity. How, after Shiloh had come, after the great sacrifice had been accomplished, after the veil had been torn, the partition wall demolished, the "new and living way" consecrated, and the gates thrown open for the Gentiles to enter the sanctuary, and even after the Lord had commanded His disciples to go and preach the Gospel in the whole world and to every creature, how, we ask, could the handful of disciples have called the hundreds of thousands of waiting Gentiles a little, insignificant, and faithless sister? Have not the Jews now declared themselves in open rebellion against Christ whom they crucified? Have they not now taken measures to eradicate His disciples and their creed? Has not Jesus foretold that when they should act in that outrageous manner, killing the only *heir* of the master of the vineyard, that they would be miserably destroyed, and the kingdom and the vineyard taken from them and given unto the Gentiles? Were not the Gentiles now to become *the Church*, and obliterate soon the very trace of the ancient dispensation and Church by the millions of Gentile believers? Did not the Bride herself represent these waiting and praying Gentiles as precious plants ripe for salvation, as aromatic flowers deserving of cultivation, as jewels worthy of the crown of her Bridegroom, when towards the end of the preceding chapter she prayed ardently for the speedy appearance of her Beloved, that they might go forth into the fields and villages in order to gather them? Was it not with regard to the waiting believers of the Gentiles that the Bride said, "The mandrakes have sent forth an odour, and at our gates are all varieties

of precious plants (or spices); both new and old, O my beloved, have I laid up for thee?" *

Some of these interpreters seize on the fact that a few of the Judaising Christians newly converted and come out from the sect of the Pharisees would lie in the way of the Gentile converts. But on the least study of the subject it will be seen that the Apostles themselves never participated in nor encouraged these extravagant views; and that

* A late author of an exposition of this Song forgot himself so far, in his struggles to support his erroneous view that the "little sister" means the *Gentile nations*, that he took up a hot burning coal, as it were, to quench his thirst for fantastical fables. He quotes Ezek. xvi. 46, where the prophet said to apostate Israel, or rather Jerusalem, "And thy younger (or lesser) sister, that dwelleth at thy right hand, is Sodom and her daughters" (or "villages"). Of course that Gentile author was impartial enough to make his Gentile progenitors pass for the party designed by the prophet under the flattering figure of "Sodom and her daughters," thus thinking to have established the phantom, that the "little sister" of the Song must signify the *Gentile nations*. But unhappily there is, in the very same verse, *another older and larger sister* called "Samaria and her daughters," which said expositor did not choose to cite! Now, if the younger sister "Sodom" signifies all the Gentile nations, what will he make the large enormous sister Samaria to represent? Is it to signify the mountains and valleys, rivers and seas of the globe? or perhaps the fallen angels! And which of those three sisters does that author make to speak in this Song? Is it the oldest Samaria? Has she now become the Church? Or is it still the middle one? and why does she not ask what to do with her eldest sister Samaria? is she dead? has she already been converted? or what else has become of her?

It is clear as light that Ezekiel in said passage refers to real *Samaria*, to real *Sodom*, as he does to real *Jerusalem*, which he compares to the former in sinfulness and corruption, as he says in the following verse, "Hast thou not walked likewise in their ways, and done after their abominations?" Had not Isaiah and other prophets also compared corrupted Jerusalem to the real Sodom and Gomorrah? What could Ezekiel do more than even define the geographical situation of these two sisters, placing the one at the "right hand" and the other at the "left hand" of Jerusalem? Is it not evident that while Samaria, including the ten tribes and their territories, was styled the greater sister of Jerusalem which included only two tribes, Sodom is therefore called the smaller sister, because of its real smallness compared with Judea! Where will fancy stop with its daring speculations upon Holy Scriptures! If a fair quotation of Scripture can be made with regard to the meaning of the "little sister," it is from the prophet Amos, who, when he received oracles of tearful judgment about to be poured upon his nation, twice exclaimed, "O Lord God, forgive, I beseech thee; for how will Jacob stand (*i.e.* such great calamities), seeing he is so small," or "so little?" It is the very word קטן (Katon), employed in our verse in the feminine form (see Amos vii. 2—5). But far be it from us to establish a theory from such an incidental word, and regarding a subject of so great importance as the prophecy in question, which must be proved, and not conjectured.

even the Judaising Christians in question never doubted of the admittance of the Gentiles to the entire privileges of the New Covenant in Shiloh, who was to be their Redeemer as well as that of the Jews, but thought that the covenant of circumcision entered into with Abraham was binding on the Gentiles who embraced the faith of that Patriarch. It has been already and fully proved from facts like that of Simeon's declaration that the child was the promised "light to enlighten the Gentiles," from the numerous "Grecian disciples" who joined the Church, even long before the conversion of Cornelius (see Acts vi. 1, and consult our remarks pp. 315), and from numerous other striking facts and incidents of that time (which were alluded to pp. 316), that not only the disciples of Christ who heard His parables and prophecies regarding the coming in of the Gentiles, and who after His resurrection received explicit orders for their invitation, but that even the ancient Church in general, and before His coming, was by no means ignorant of the fact that when the promised Messiah came the gathering in of the Gentiles into the bond of the Covenant would immediately follow. If the greatest part of that Church stumbled at the coming of Christ, this affected by no means the question about the coming in of the Gentiles; for had these unbelieving Jews believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah they would not for a moment have doubted that the gathering in of the Gentiles must follow His coming. Now we have nothing to do with the unbelieving, but with the believing Jews, with the disciples of Christ, and we ask how could they, after all they saw, knew, and heard, ask Him questions about what was to be done with the Gentiles who stood at the door knocking and asking admittance? How could they call the multitudes of believing Gentiles, who, with fasting, prayers, and supplications, waited for the happy day of their visitation (see our remarks pp. 315—22), a "little, faithless, hopeless, and refractory sister," in the face of the open revolt of their own nation, who rejected and crucified their Saviour, and was now fire and sword against His very name? Is it the pious, fasting, and praying Cornelius, with his household and friends? Is it the eunuch of Queen Candace, and the great numbers of the same kind who went to Jerusalem to worship the living God? Is it the great "multitudes" of

devout persons in Greece who eagerly waited for the tidings of salvation? Is it they, we ask, whom the Apostles of Christ would have styled a faithless, perverted, hardened, and worthless and hopeless little sister? Or was it not rather the Pharisees and their adherents, who, combined with the Romans, rose up "against God and His Christ," crucified the Prince of Glory, and commenced to pour out their fury upon His disciples, and to persecute them with chains, the prison, and the sword?

The Bride's question is evidently about a body of men to whom the gospel was to be preached, but who, in her judgment, were in no wise prepared to accept it. She did not ask, "Shall we abandon our 'little,' faithless, and unripe sister, and give up the very idea of addressing her, seeing she is stubborn and rebellious?" But her question was, "What shall we do for our sister in the day that she shall be spoken for" (or "to")? It is thus evident that "spoken for" (or "to") she must be—that she must unavoidably be invited to come and join her elder sister, the Bride, in the New Covenant. And what forces the Bride to do that? It is the irrevocable order of her Lord—it is the repeated commandment of the risen Saviour to "begin at Jerusalem," to commence the gospel-preaching first of all at "Jerusalem and throughout all Judea." It was that order that astonished the Bride, who, to avoid disturbance and persecution, was obliged to leave that "wilderness," swarming with bitter enemies, with thirsty wolves, to meet her risen Saviour in a mountain in Galilee, and at a retired place at the Sea of Tiberias. Now, while she expected to be ordered to flee immediately from that rebellious and infatuated city, and avoid her country altogether, and go at once into distant lands to preach the gospel to willing, waiting, and praying Gentiles, she heard to her great surprise that she must immediately return again into that wilderness, and begin her mission-work in the midst of violence and death.

At the beginning of this chapter the Church was represented praying for the speedy coming of her Lord in the flesh in the form of a brother, that is to say, as a son of Zion, as she was the daughter of Zion (see exposition of that verse). Nothing, therefore, can be clearer than that the newly chosen Church, consisting of the disciples and first believers in Christ, calls the fallen-off portion of the ancient

Church "our sister;" for that portion of the Jews who now assumed the attitude of open enemies was nothing else but the "sister" of both Jesus and His disciples. Of them Paul says: "I have great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart, . . . for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh. . . . Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came."* And can there remain any doubt that these very Israelites, to whom "blindness happened in part," who had a "zeal of God but not according to knowledge," and who were now enemies of Christ, His cross, and His disciples, are alone indicated under the appellations of the "little breastless sister," and "our sister?"

When the Lord appeared to Ananias at Damascus, and ordered him to visit the famous and dreaded Saul of Tarsus, the surprised disciple said: "Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem; and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name."† Is not our passage identical with this? When the surprised disciples heard the Lord's order that they should return and preach the gospel at Jerusalem, they said: "Lord, it is true that Jerusalem is our sister according to the flesh, but alas, she is unnatural, hardened, cruel, without affection, without faith, without reason,—she crucified her Lord and Saviour, her elder brother, and she hates us unto death. What then can we expect at her hands? How are we to go and ask her in covenant-marriage to Thee whom she persecuted to death? 'What shall we do for our sister in the day that she shall be spoken for' according to thy commandment? Is she not now very 'little,' and altogether insignificant, compared with the great multitudes of virgins of the 'daughters of Jerusalem,' of awakened and praying Gentiles, who will certainly accept our tidings and invitation with inexpressible joy?"

Before we enter upon the consideration of the Saviour's answer to the question of His astonished disciples, we have some remarks to make, and a most important passage in the Acts to explain. Our Lord rebukes the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, and said that they were "slow of

* Rom. ix. 2-5.

† Acts ix. 13, 14.

heart (*i.e.*, of understanding) to believe all that the prophets have spoken ;” but it is evident that even after He had “opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures,” they had yet no idea of the stupendous and overwhelming work that was soon to be accomplished by their instrumentality. It was only after the Holy Spirit was poured out upon them on the memorable day of Pentecost that they ceased as it were to follow their own calculations, and to guide their actions by their own reason. The Spirit having taken possession of them, and lifted them above material laws and mortal passions, urged by an irresistible power they issued forth from their “upper chamber” like a mighty stream, rushed against tempest, fire, and sword, braved death and the fury of violent men ; but they knew not yet what that spiritual revolution would ultimately produce. Before that event, they paused at every step, they marvelled and calculated, believed in part and doubted in part, were often surprised and heated to enthusiasm, and as soon cooled down and brought to a stand still. During their three years’ instruction their Divine Tutor had often to answer questions that make us blush at the ignorance that dictated them ; but we forget that they had to look down into unfulfilled and obscure prophecy, which to us is clear and evident, because we look back into literally fulfilled oracles. We forget that they had to fight against national errors, and fabulous explanations of prophecy regarding Messiah’s coming and the nature of His kingdom. This subject was the most perplexing to them. They knew from Scripture that Messiah was to be a universal King, and “His dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the uttermost ends of the earth,” and this the blinded Pharisees explained in a literal and temporal sense, and so the people believed it in general, and so did also the fishermen of Galilee believe it. Hence, when they saw the humble attitude of their Master, and that He took no steps whatever, to possess Himself of some province or country, whence to declare war against all nations of the earth, and finally overthrow them, they were greatly surprised. Here was the source of all the errors which they committed in their calculations, and all the strange questions and demands which they addressed so often unto Jesus. Hence, the boldness and daring of Peter to “rebuke” his Master for saying that

He must soon die on the cross! What! thought Peter, should Messiah die before having taken possession of all the kingdoms of the earth! Impossible. Hence, the daring request of two disciples to have a pre-eminence in that kingdom, the dispute which continued among all the disciples about hierarchical mastery, even to the very night of Gethsemane, and many other things which to mention and explain is not our present purpose. And this was the principal reason of their bewilderment and dispersion when they saw their Master had fallen into the hands of His enemies; as we also see from the language of the two disciples near Emmaus, "But we trusted that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel," *i.e.*, from the power of the Romans, and established His dominion over the whole earth, but now He has been crucified!

The marvellous scenes at His death, His resurrection, and the "opening of their understandings to understand the Scriptures," had shed much light upon their darkness. It showed them that the real nature of the Lord's kingdom was spiritual—that he came to conquer sin and death, and to deliver captives from the power of Satan; but how this was to be accomplished, they knew not yet. And now another great perplexity began to trouble their minds, *viz.*, the mysterious order of their risen Master to "begin at Jerusalem!" Then it is to be still a kingdom! an army of believers! yes, but how should this army, or part of it, be recruited at Jerusalem! in the rebellious, faithless, and stubborn city!—and from those very men who insisted on His being put to death!—and is then Israel to be delivered after all, and to form the nucleus of the Messianic army and kingdom! and how is this to be accomplished? In the explanation of this difficulty, we have already seen, is found the fulfilment and explanation of Solomon's prophecy regarding the question of the Bride about the "little sister," and what was to be done with her on the day that she shall be spoken for, or in the day that the gospel shall be preached unto her. There is a passage in the Acts which perfectly illustrates the question of the Bride, the cause of her surprise, and the Saviour's answer.

"And being assembled together with them, he commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, *saieth he*, ye

have heard of me; for John truly baptised with water; but ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost; not many days hence." This mystery they could not understand.—What! begin at Jerusalem!—"Jerusalem that killeth her prophets, and stoneth all that are sent to her, and at last killed 'the Heir,' crucified the Son of God, shall still the kingdom of Christ begin there! "When they therefore came together (for the last time), they asked of Him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" Here is exactly the question about the "little sister"—Lord, what dost thou mean by telling us to abide in and begin at Jerusalem? "Wilt thou at this time," after she had crucified Thee, and when she is enraged and in open revolt against Thee and us—"Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to her, and bring her within the bond of the covenant! And by what means? If she would not hear Thee and Thy repeated invitations, what shall we, a handful of despised and persecuted disciples do for her in the day that she shall be spoken for" (or "to")? "And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times and the seasons which the Father hath put into his own power. But you shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."* The expression of "being witnesses," or that of "bearing His name" before men, means nothing else but to be instruments in His hand for the conversion of many souls; as was the Lord's answer to the astonished Ananias regarding Paul, "He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel," and we know what this signified. Thus we see that the Lord's answer to His wondering disciples was in substance, that they should not perplex themselves with needless fear of difficulties, nor be envious about things which they neither needed nor could understand at that time; but be assured that as soon as the Holy Spirit shall be poured out upon them from above, and they shall receive full power for their mission, multitudes of that now despised, feared, and slighted "little sister," shall be converted by

* Acts i. 4—8.

their instrumentality—that when they shall thus have been strengthened in Jerusalem and Judea, they shall then go forth “unto the uttermost parts of the earth.” Exactly the same is the first part of the answer of our Lord to His Bride in the Song, “If she be a wall,” *i.e.*, if this “little sister” that is now rebellious and faithless, be converted and built up as the first wall in the temple of God, “we shall build on her a silver palace,” or “towers of silver,” *i.e.*, with her aid we shall call in and build up the Gentiles, upon this first wall, this first Church built up at Jerusalem. And here we observe that the Hebrew text will bear perfectly the rendering of, “Those of her,” instead of “If she,” meaning that those of the “little sister” that would prove a wall in faith, upon them the silver palaces would be built. But we must first say a word about the images employed, of “wall” and building, before finishing the explanation of the passage.

In Scripture language the establishment, growth, increase, and prosperity of a nation, tribe, or family is expressed by “building up,” or planting, “At what instant I decree concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom to be built up and planted.”* Jeremiah was set as a prophet “over nations and kingdoms, to destroy and to throw down, to build, and to plant.”† This language is very frequently used by the prophets regarding Israel as a nation, but by none so often as by Jeremiah, “I will set mine eyes upon them for good, . . . I will build them, and not destroy.”‡ Again, “I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel.”§ The people and elders of Bethlehem said to Boaz, “The Lord make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel,”|| *i.e.*, of whom came the twelve tribes. Of this woman (Ruth) came David, unto whom the Lord promised to build him a “sure house,” and to establish his throne for ever; and it is well known that this “everlasting throne” meant the throne of the Messiah, of whom it was said that he shall inherit “David’s throne,” meaning the everlasting throne promised to David, and consequently David’s house was built up in the Messiah. The temple built at Jerusalem became then the type of that Messianic house, throne,

* Jer. xviii. 9. † Jer. i. 10. ‡ Jer. xxiv. 6.
 § Jer. xxxi. 4. || Ruth iv. 11.

and kingdom, and the prophets often used the figures of Zion, temple, and Jerusalem regarding the Christian Church, the spiritual temple of God, and Messiah's everlasting kingdom. So the Psalmist, "And the heathen nations shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth thy glory; for when Jehovah shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His glory."† This refers to Him who is the express image of Jehovah's glory. He appeared and built up Zion, the Christian Church, which the heathen and the kings of the earth perceived, and learned to fear the name of the Lord.

This glorious and spiritual building is variously called Zion, or the temple of God, and its builders are in the first place the Lord Messiah, "Behold the man whose name is THE BRANCH, . . . He shall build the temple of the Lord. Even He shall build the temple of the Lord, and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne," &c.,‡ and, in the second place, it is the Church also, as the same prophet in the same passage says, "And they that are far off (or distant nations) shall come and build in the temple of the Lord."§ The Church, then, is at once built and building, the "lively stones" that are built are masons at the same time; the Church is building along with her glorious Head, "for we are labourers together with God."|| Thus the Lord Jesus and His Church are the builders of that temple and at the same time the temple itself, He being the Corner-stone, the apostles and prophets the foundation, the daughter of Zion (or the first Christian Church at Jerusalem), the first and principal wall, and the Gentiles palaces and towers upon that wall. Again, every individual member, who, as a lively stone, is built up in that holy temple, becomes a builder in his turn; for this is the first fruit which every branch in Christ must yield, though in different shapes and quantities according to the gift of grace.

Jesus was made perfect by sufferings, and by His death and resurrection, was laid by the Father, through the everlasting Spirit, as the chief Corner-stone and beginning of that building, of which He also became the first and principal Builder. He ordered His disciples to remain at Jerusalem until the Spirit should be poured out upon them, that

* Ps. cii. 15, 16.

† Zech. vi 15.

‡ Zech. vi. 12, 13.

§ 1 Cor. iii. 9.

when they were built up as the foundation on that Corner-stone, they should become builders in turn, that when they had received the power of the Holy Spirit, they might be witnesses at Jerusalem, and convert thousands of their "little sister," and build them up as the first and principal wall, to appear, as it were, above the ground, and on which the Gentiles were to be built up as towers and palaces. "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon." This is the language of one precious stone of the *wall*, and who once belonged to the faithless "little sister," but who was built up by Christ, and by Ananias, a builder in His Church, and became himself a great "master builder," to build up many of the "sons of strangers" into stones of the same temple of God. Now he speaks to those of his Gentile converts who had become builders in their turn, and exhorts them to take care to build on the same foundation. When he says, "I have laid the foundations," he means that he laid it open unto them by doctrine, as he said, further, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."* More explicit is the same apostle in another address to another Gentile Church. "Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief Corner-stone, in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom also ye are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."† It is easily seen that in the latter passage Paul speaks to a Church that has become a part of that Holy temple of God, while in the former he addressed those who by the grace of God had become active builders in that temple, *i.e.*, preachers of the gospel and witnesses of the cross after having been built up themselves. These he exhorted to take care and recommend to others the same foundation and Corner-stone, that was laid before them by him (Paul), also to take care about what persons they should build upon that foundation, *i.e.*, what persons they

* 1 Cor. iii. 10—12. † Eph. ii. 19—22.

admit into communion with, and as members of, that Church and temple of God. "Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."* With these observations we return to the building of the wall and palace in this passage of the Song.

The disciples, surprised at the order of their risen Master that they should remain, and begin at Jerusalem, asked Him what they were expected to do for their faithless, straying, and rebellious little sister? how it was possible to restore now, "at this time," the kingdom unto Israel, or to begin the foundation of Messiah's universal reign at Jerusalem, seeing that she was so unripe, so hostile, and so irritated against Him, and against all those who call upon His name? To which the Lord answered, "If she be a wall" (or "those of her who shall prove a wall") *i.e.*, If after ye have received the power of the Spirit to bear me witness at Jerusalem and in all Judea, she return unto me, repent, be converted, and be built up as the first wall in my spiritual sanctuary, "we shall build on her a palace of silver," *i.e.*, strengthened by her number and aid, you will then go forth into all the world (and I will be with you) to call in and build up the Gentiles; and this very "little sister," whom ye now despise as unripe, faithless, hardened and worthless, will furnish you with Pauls, and Stephens, and Philips, and Procheruses, and Nicanors, and thousands of other zealous and faithful disciples, full of the Holy Spirit, and mighty in works, and who will constitute the first and formidable wall on which, and by whose instrumentality we will build up the Gentiles as silver palaces. That this was really the case we know from history, and that it was appointed by a decree of heaven long before, many oracles of the prophets fortold, as David did, "The rod of thy strength (or 'the sceptre of thy power'), the Lord will send out of Zion; rule thou in the midst of thy enemies." Messiah's kingdom was to begin at Jerusalem, His sceptre and rule was to be acknowledged first of all in the very midst of those who had

* 1 Cor. iii. 12, 13.

despised, rejected, and pierced Him, and so it really happened; and Solomon was here favoured with a view regarding the first establishment of the kingdom of his antitype.

The second condition about this little sister was: "If she be a door" (or, "Those of her that shall prove a door") *i.e.*, If she be undecided, doubting, opposing, moving to and fro on the hinges of unbelief, and still causing rebellion and persecution—"we shall enclose her (or fasten her) with a board (or beam) of cedar," *i.e.* put it out of her power to hurt you and your work, and make sure of her not being able to hinder the progress of the building. This condition, alas, was as literally fulfilled as the former. As a great multitude of this "little sister" obtained mercy for themselves and proved a wall, a foundation, and blessing to the Gentiles, so the other portion were blinded and hardened, and going about (like the door on the hinges), to establish their own righteousness, submitted not themselves unto the righteousness of God." Having proved a turning door, having shown themselves destitute of stability and faith, and full of perversion and rebellion, "God hath concluded them all (or as the margin reads, 'hath shut them all up together') in unbelief," and in order to prevent their being an obstacle in the way of the builders, He fastened her with a beam of cedar, *i.e.*, plunged her into awful calamities, destroyed her stronghold, and dispersed her as captives throughout the vast wilderness of the nations, where they had, and have still, too much to do for themselves to be able to obstruct the building of the Messianic edifice. This is, in our opinion, the meaning of this passage; and should the reader find still a shade of difficulty about the ִּם (im) which doubtless signifies "If," let him remember that in the image where the whole nation appears under the figure of a single "little sister," no other word could be employed, for Solomon could not apply to her both alternatives at once, and say if she become half wall and half door, therefore he put it conditionally, if she prove the one or the other. But the moment we know that it is not a single person but a nation we understand that these conditions expressed in "If she," mean nothing else but "Those of this nation that shall prove a wall, upon them we will build the silver towers" as in the following passage: "If thou return to the

Almighty, thou shalt be built up," &c.* "But those of her who shall prove a door we will fasten with a board or beam of cedar"—"And I will distress Ariel. . . . And I will camp against thee round about, and will lay siege against thee with a mount, and I will raise forts against thee, and thou shalt be brought down, . . . and thy speech shall be low out of the dust," &c.† And all this came to pass.

THE CONVERTED "LITTLE SISTER."

10. I am a wall, and my breasts like towers,
Therefore am I in His eyes
As her who hath found favour (or peace).

This we consider to be the language of the converted "little sister," or of those thousands of Israelites who have been converted at Jerusalem and throughout Judea after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples. It is the person of whose conversion the Bride (the Apostles and the first few disciples) despaired, and asked her Beloved what she could do for her, and with her, in the deplorable and hopeless state she was in. It is the person regarding whom the risen Saviour said that she would yet become the first and principal wall in His temple, and on which the silver palace would be reared; it is this "little sister," who appears triumphantly in our verse and says: "Here am I, the once abandoned, despised and despaired of 'little sister,' whom my elder sister considered as hopeless and unripe, but who, according to the prediction of the Redeemer, am now a wall in Jehovah's sanctuary, and upon whom are built many towers and palaces, by whose instrumentality many Christian Churches among the Gentiles are established and reared, and therefore I am (or was) in His eyes as her who found favour and peace long before me; even as my elder sister who found her Saviour before and immediately after His death and resurrection, and who despaired of my ever finding Him." And here again the Apostle Paul will explain the language of the "little sister." In regard to Paul himself the Bride once said: "Lord, I have heard

* Job xxii. 23.

† Is. xxix. 1—4.

of this man how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem ;” and to whom the Lord replied, “He is a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name before the Gentiles,” &c.* And what were ultimately the statements of that “little sister?” “For I am the least of the Apostles, that am not meet to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am ; and His grace which was bestowed on me was not in vain ; but I laboured more abundantly than they all.”† Again, “I am become a fool in glorying ; ye have compelled me : for I ought to have been commended of you ; for in nothing I am behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing. Truly the signs of an Apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.‡ Is not this the very sentiment of the “little sister” in our verse? Paul says that he was the last to whom the Lord appeared after His resurrection, and he calls himself “one born out of due time” (*i.e.* contrary to all expectation), but that nevertheless he had found grace in the eyes of the Lord even as she who was with him from the beginning. “True,” says he, “I have come only at the eleventh hour, but by the grace of God I am what I am, and not a whit behind any of those who bore the heat of the day. I am a ‘wall,’ I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.”§ “My breasts are like towers ;” “I laboured more abundantly than they all ; I nourished many thousands of precious souls with the Gospel of truth, and espoused them as chaste and undefiled virgins unto Christ.” “But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her own children ; so, being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted to you, not the Gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. . . . For ye, brethren, became the followers of the Churches of God, which in Judea are in Jesus Christ.”|| And who were those “Churches in Judea” but the converted “little sister,” after whose example, and upon whom these Gentile Churches were built like lofty towers upon a solid wall ! “Therefore was I in His eyes as her who hath found peace,” “even as her unto whom the

* Acts ix. 13–15. † 1 Cor. xv. 9, 10. ‡ 2 Cor. xii 11, 12.
§ 2 Tim. iv. 7. || 1 Thes. ii. 7, 8–14.

Lord had said long before my conversion, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." "By the grace of God I have now obtained the same peace," and "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown o^c righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me in that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."*

In thus making the great apostle speak for all his brethren that came forth from the midst of the rebellious nation styled the "little sister who had no breasts," but who, by the grace of God, formed the first wall built upon the foundation of the Apostles, who themselves were built and established on the precious corner-stone laid in Zion; and in comparing the whole matter with the argument of the same apostle in Rom. xi. 1—5, there appears a sublime subject for serious contemplation, which must produce a cheering solemnity in every soul enlightened by the Spirit of God. Behold for a moment that holy and zealous servant of God, Elijah the Tishbite, pouring forth bitter complaints before the Lord of Hosts against the rebellious and prophet-killing Israel, and saying, "I am left alone and they seek my life." But he who sees in secret told him that there were yet *seven thousand* men in the midst of that nation whose knees had never bowed before Baal. What a deep sore, mingled with joy, must this astonishing announcement have caused in the heart of that angelic man!—a sore, when he remembered how Abraham wrestled with God for doomed Sodom, and how he prevailed to reduce to *five* the number of the just men for whose sake the whole of that country would have been saved, while he called down judgment upon his own nation which numbered still *seven thousand saints* in the midst of her! At the same time, how must his breast have heaved with holy joy when he heard that happy statement made by Him who knows the heart and tries the reins of man! In our Song, the Bride, on meeting her risen Saviour in the mountain of Galilee, is represented as despairing of her own nation, and regarding her as unripe, hopeless, worthless, and to be utterly abandoned for the time being as breastless, as "a very forward generation, children in whom is no faith," as "a na-

* 2 Tim. iv. 8.

tion void of counsel, and in whom there was no understanding." But He who, even when He wore the crown of thorns, knew that His real sceptre will be sent to Him from Zion—that His kingdom will be first established at Jerusalem—He who, even from the height of His cross, penetrated the profoundest depth of the future, told His despairing Bride that, even in the midst of revolted Jerusalem and Judea, there are sufficient materials for composing the first wall of His spiritual and glorious structure. The Apostles tarry at Jerusalem for the promise; the Comforter comes and fills them with supernatural vigour, zeal, and power; they issue from their chamber and preach the gospel of a crucified Saviour in the very streets and broad places of the revolted city, and multitudes came forth out the midst of that nation, flying like the "doves into their windows" when threatened by a dark storm and tempest, and cry aloud, "What shall we do to be saved?" Thousands upon thousands are baptized; "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart, and of one soul." And thus the first and mighty wall was built up at Jerusalem, by the instrumentality of the Apostle, out of the "little sister," whom the now astonished apostles once considered as entirely hopeless! But the upper structure, the palaces and towers, were then to be commenced, and who is to do that? One still belonging to the rebellious "little sister," even after thousands of her children had embraced Christ—one who was the terror of all believers. Saul of Tarsus, the greatest persecutor of the Church, became the greatest of the apostles, and, by the grace of God bestowed upon him, was able to rear up perhaps as many churches among the Gentiles, as all the other apostles made individual converts in Judea. Now he stands, in the passages quoted above, at the end of his career and ministry, a marvel to apostles and disciples, to Jew and Gentile, to the generation then living, and to the end of the world. What are the miserable victories of the Alexanders and Cæsars of this world when placed beside the victories of this astonishing man of God? What were their travels, their energies, their plans, their words, and their deeds, beside those of the marvellous Paul? While they, or rather the mighty armies at their command, left behind them everywhere destruction, desolation, and woe, Paul, without any other suit but his

faith, zeal, and grace, left behind him more living, God-praising, and rejoicing souls, more monuments of peace, joy, and glory, in Europe, Asia, and Africa, than they did carcasses of the victims of their ambition. And, O, look at that little, weak, and persecuted Paul, the prodigious son of "worm Jacob," how he could show to the apostles that in him the once despised and despaired of "little sister" has proved a strong and high "wall," with lofty towers and palaces, in almost every part of the globe. But while we have confined ourselves to Paul alone for the illustration of our verse, we must not forget the great numbers of primitive believers, who, by reason of persecution and other causes, went forth from Judea, and carried the Gospel tidings into far and distant countries, and who all came forth of that "little sister." "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word."* This took place not only before Paul's conversion, but as the results of his persecutions, and the whole band of these scattered Gospel-preachers came forth from the mass of the nation called once the "little breastless sister," and they also carried first the Gospel into Antioch,† and to many other distant countries, and certainly they could say, "I am a wall, and my breast like towers, therefore am I in His eyes as her who hath found peace" (or grace, favour.) For additional illustration of the figure, consult the passages indicated below.‡

THE UNITED CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

11. Solomon had a vineyard in Baal Hamon,
He let out that vineyard to keepers :
Every one was to bring for the fruit thereof,
A thousand pieces of silver.
12. My own vineyard is before me ;
The thousand unto thee, O, Solomon,
And two hundred unto the keepers of the fruits thereof.

Instead of entering into an examination or refutation of the various views of commentators on this seemingly difficult passage, we think it preferable to give at once the simple and clear explanation which forces itself upon us in the unbroken chain of argument, events, circumstances and

* Acts viii. 4.

† See Acts xi. 19—22.

‡ 1 Cor. iii. 2, iv. 15, 16 ; Heb. v. 11—14.

consequences contained in, and inferred from the context and subject matter of the whole portion in the last chapter, which we call the *Conclusion* of the Song. We saw the astonishment of the disciples when their risen Saviour told them to tarry, and begin at Jerusalem, and their question to Him about what they were to do with (or for) that rebellious "little sister" in the day that she shall be spoken for (or to). The answer that those of her (revolted Jerusalem) that shall be converted to Him would form the first and principal wall in His temple, on which the "silver palaces," or the Gentile nations and Churches would be constructed and built up; and that those who shall remain blind and refractory would be encompassed and enclosed with a beam of cedar, *i.e.*, completely prevented from hindering the work of the building, or the propagation of the Christian religion and dispensation. We also saw how the converted "little sister" triumphantly said: "I am a wall, and my breasts like towers, therefore am I in His eyes as her that hath found peace" (see explanation of that verse). Now we have in the present two verses the voice of the whole Hebrew-Christian Church of Judea and Jerusalem, including the Apostles and the many thousands that were converted by them to faith in Christ, after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This newly-planted, but firmly established, growing, and prospering Church recounts here in short but comprehensive words, her recent history, the origin of her spiritual existence, the basis on which she was built, and the precious privileges she already enjoyed.

"Solomon had a vineyard in Baal-Hamon," *i.e.*, in the "place of tumult," or "place of uproar and tumultuous assemblies," or "place of confusion."* Such a place, alas, was Jerusalem at the period to which this passage refers. When the prophet Isaiah sang the Song of his Beloved regarding His vineyard—when he described that vineyard as it once was, and as it was intended to be, he said, "My Beloved had a vineyard on the hill (or corner) of Ben-

* The reader may consult the following passages with regard to the meaning of חמון (Hamon): Is. xvii. 12; Ps. lxxxiii. 2, lxxv. 7 as a verse; Ex. xiv. 24; Deut. vii. 23, xxviii. 20; 1 Kings i. 41—45; 2 Chron. xv. 5, 6; Ps. xlvi. 6, &c. The word *Baal* signifies often a *place*, as "Baal-Perazim," place of great slaughter—"Baal-Tamar," place of palm trees—"Baal-Meon," a place of dwellings, &c.

Shamen," *i.e.*, of a fat or fertile place. But when he came to describe that same vineyard in its corrupted and degenerated state, he said, "When He looked for justice, behold there was oppression, for righteousness, behold there was a cry" (or "a confused uproar of violence," Is. v. 1—7.) This was the Jerusalem spoken of in this passage, the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts in which His servants were ill-treated, wounded, and murdered, and in which at last His Son and only Heir was killed. Nevertheless in that very place of tumult and confusion was the "Lord's vineyard," and so far from giving it up as lost, so far from abandoning it altogether, as the disciples judged at first, the once slain Heir, the now risen Son of God, claimed it still as His—yea, "He let out that vineyard to keepers," *i.e.*, He gave it in charge to His Apostles when he told them to return to it and to wait there for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and then to cultivate it by beginning there the preaching of His Gospel. Every one of these keepers was to bring forth "for the fruit thereof" (or, "as the fruit thereof"), "a thousand pieces of silver," *i.e.*, a thousand souls converted unto the Lord of the vineyard.

Though this number *thousand* may be taken at random, and considered as merely standing for a high number, or multitude, in which sense it is often used in Scripture, it is not less interesting to consider that when Isaiah speaks of the Messianic period he says, "The little one shall become a thousand, and the small one a strong nation (or 'a great multitude'), I the Lord will hasten it in its time."* And is it not astonishing to see the literal fulfilment of this prophecy, to see in how short a time the twelve Galileans, including Matthias who replaced Judas, grew into a multitude of more than as many thousands? "About three thousand souls" were converted on the day of Pentecost.† On the occasion of the miracle wrought at the temple gate by Peter and John, and on their preaching Christ to the astonished people, "about five thousand believed," and were added to the Church.‡ In addition to these 8000 we read, "And the word of God increased, and the number of disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly, and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."§ Thus we see

* Is. lx. 22. † Acts ii. 41. ‡ Acts iv. 4. § Acts vi. 7.

that the twelve "keepers of the vineyard in the place of tumult," and amidst uproar and persecution, brought forth a thousand each, that every one of "these little ones" became "a thousand" in a very short time. We know too that the "small one," or the "little sister," became very soon "a mighty and strong nation" (or "a vast multitude"), when, by her blessed instrumentality, great multitudes of the Gentiles were converted to Christ, and built on and joined with her.

Now, before we enter upon the explanation of verse 12, we must observe that this garden, or vineyard, which Solomon had at Baal-Hamen, or in the place of tumult, in revolted Jerusalem, was just the Church that now speaks in this passage, *i.e.*, the many thousands of converted souls that came forth from the revolted multitude that was once styled the "little sister." It was for that Church that the Apostles or keepers of the vineyard were ordered by their risen Master to tarry at Jerusalem until these first fruits of the Spirit should be gathered in. As soon as this was accomplished, as soon as the thousands of Israel were converted and constituted the first Church, the principal wall on which the silver palaces (the Gentile nations) were to be reared up, then the Apostles of Christ laid down their exclusive power and authority, and vested it in that Church. They were still venerated by that Church, that "considered them as her pillars," they presided at her councils and public deliberations, and were her boast and her glory, but the power, rule, and authority and government, was in her, in the Church, of which the Apostles were the honoured, leading, teaching, and guiding members. Immediately after the conversion of three thousand souls on the day of Pentecost, we find (for the first time) the name *ἐκκλησία*, *Church*, applied to the Christian community. Moreover, as soon as there was a Church, she begun not only to rule and govern herself, but also to preach the Gospel in her turn, for we find it related in the Acts of the Apostles that those of her members who were dispersed by the persecution which soon arose against her at Jerusalem preached the Gospel wherever they went.

The more this important subject is considered according to the only inspired and authorised narrative of the Acts of the Apostles, beside which we have no account whatever

about the movements and labours of the Apostles, which is either consistent in itself or worthy of being relied on, it is most striking to see the surprising and sudden stop put to the extraordinary conversion of multitudes by the original twelve Apostles (including Matthias) beyond Jerusalem, as if it had been determined by the Lord that their chief work should go no farther than the conversion of the thousands that came forth out of the rebellious multitude (of the "little sister") of whom they despaired; and that as soon as she came forth, or as soon as the Church of Jerusalem received existence and life, she took the apostolic message in hand and carried it on with vigour and prosperity on her own account and authority. Philip, by whose instrumentality Samaria was converted, was a son of that Church. And so were Paul, Barnabas, Mark, Silas, Apollos, and the hundreds that preached the Gospel in the places in which they were dispersed "upon the persecution that arose about Stephen." As soon as some of these had formed the Church at Antioch, it was unto it and not unto the Apostles that the Holy Spirit said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."* It was that Church, by her Presbytery, and not any of the Apostles, that "laid their hands on them and sent them away," for the great work of the conversion of the Gentiles. And Paul, speaking himself about his conversion and mission, said, "Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were Apostles before me; but I went into Arabia and returned again unto Damascus."† By this, and other arguments in that place, he shows that neither his mission nor ordination had any connexion with the Apostles, but that he received them directly from Christ and His Church. Speaking of his brethren or fellow labourers, Paul said, "They are the messengers of the Churches, and the glory of Christ."‡ And never do we find them called either *delegates* of the Apostles or their messengers, or described as having derived any authority whatever from the Apostles. When the Judaising teachers came down to Antioch and disturbed the peace of that Church, Paul and Barnabas went up to Jerusalem to the Apostles and elders, not because they depended on or needed their authority or decision in any of their works or doctrine, but because the disturbers of the peace coming

* Acts xiii. 2.

† 2 Gal. i. 17.

‡ 2 Cor. viii. 23.

from Jerusalem, the impression made upon the Church of Antioch was that their doctrine might be that of the Apostles and Mother Church, to remove which impression and fear, Paul and Barnabas went up to Jerusalem. From the speech of Peter at the council, it is clear as light that up to that time the case of Cornelius was the *only case* of the conversion of a Gentile family by the instrumentality of one of the twelve Apostles, "Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe."* It is thus evident from Peter's referring to what was accomplished by him, "a good while ago" (or "in former days," or "in the days of the beginning," *i.e.*, of the Gospel preaching), that that occasion was the only one in his ministry, and that no other of the twelve Apostles had ever had any part in the conversion of the Gentiles, they being the Apostles of the circumcision, and tarried at Jerusalem. When the Apostles had sent Peter and John to Samaria, it was not to preach the Gospel, but to confirm those of the Samaritans already converted and baptised by Philip. When, after having already worked among the Gentiles for the space of seventeen years, Paul the Apostle of the uncircumcision came up to Jerusalem and saw James, Peter, and John, the arrangement was renewed that he and his fellow labourers should continue among the Gentiles, while they (James, Peter, and John, as well as the others of the twelve Apostles), should continue their original and exclusive labours among the circumcision or the Jews, for whom alone they received their mission.† Once that exclusive Hebrew apostle Peter had ventured out of his element in visiting the Gentile Church of Antioch, probably when he was visiting his Hebrew Churches; but there he conducted himself with such tergiversation and astonishing inconsistency that he drew upon himself a severe and public rebuke from the great Apostle of the Gentiles.‡ But as this is not the place to enter at large on this subject, we have only to add that according to Solomon's prophecy in this last chapter, and according to the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and the different Epistles, it is evident that the mission which the twelve Apostles received from their risen Master was exclusively to the Jews, or the "little sister."

* Acts xv. 7.

† See Gal. i. 18, ii. 1—9, compare verse 8.

‡ Gal. ii. 11—21.

That as soon as the first wall was built at Jerusalem, or the first Church established there, though the Apostles still continued to direct the councils and to preside over it, it was that Hebrew and original Church herself, and all the branches formed by her, such as the Church of Antioch, that undertook the building of the "silver palaces," the conversion of the Gentiles in distant countries.*

It is the above fact, viz., the self-government of the Christian Church from the first day of her existence, that the Holy Spirit foretold by Solomon, when he puts the words of our passage into the mouth of the Bride, or the first Hebrew Christian Church formed at Jerusalem. First she recounts her origin, that the Lord of Hosts had a vineyard in the place of tumult, of uproar, and contention in revolted Jerusalem, in disordered Judea—that He gave or let out that vineyard to keepers, *i.e.*, to the Apostles, that they should cultivate it and claim the fruits thereof in His name, and that every one of those keepers was to bring a thousand as the fruit thereof to Solomon, the Prince of Peace and Lord of the vineyard. We have seen how by means of these *thousands*, which the *keepers* by the blessing of God were enabled to bring forth, the first Christian Church and vineyard was planted and established at Jerusalem. And now it is that very Church that says, "My own vineyard is before me," *i.e.*, the vineyard which is in me as well as that which I am now called upon to cultivate among the Gentiles, is entirely before me, under my own charge and government, care and responsibility. "The thousand unto Thee, O Solomon," *i.e.*, Thou, Lord and owner of this vineyard, dost receive the thousands as the price and fruit of the vineyard, for I am Thine, and Thou art mine; I am the first-fruits of the vineyard, but I, as well as the fruits which Thy Spirit shall enable me further to produce, belong

* Paul, though exclusively the Apostle to the Gentiles, never neglected the Jews on his journeys and preachings to the Gentiles, and how could he do otherwise? (see Rom. ix.—xi.) But it was otherwise with Peter who was an Apostle of the circumcision, and who therefore went to Cornelius with great reluctance, and only after repeated orders. It seems clear that the Lord brought about that event, quite unique in its nature, in order to open wider the door for the Church among the Gentiles, by removing every doubt about the matter. But besides this event there is no trace of the twelve Apostles having had ever afterwards anything to do with preaching to Gentiles directly, for this was not their mission.

entirely unto Thee, who hast bought me with a great price. "And ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."* "And two hundred unto the keepers of the fruits thereof." Every member in the Church of the living God has his labours, occupation, and duties assigned to him, as well as his reward. Christ, as the Head, has the whole Church as the reward for the travail and anguish of His soul, for the Father, who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead, "set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, . . . and hath put all things under his feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."† The Apostles, as the first *keepers* of the vineyard, have their own glorious portion assigned to them. While the Lord promised an *hundred-fold* to every faithful follower for any sacrifice made in His service, He promised far more to His Apostles: "Verily, I say unto you, that ye who have followed me, in the resurrection, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."‡ "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me," &c.§ Though the charge of the first *keepers* of the vineyard, the Apostles, returned to the Church, and the vineyard is now *before her*, still there are the "fellow labourers with God," the ministers and preachers of the Gospel, the pastors of the flocks, and teachers of the word of life, who have their own portion as such: "And God hath set some in the Church; first apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers," &c.|| "Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour."¶ The Church, as the body of Christ, as the temple of the living God, includes all; for her glorious head is Christ, in whom she shines as the brightness of heaven, and in whose salvation she glories. The labourers and teachers in the midst of her, being a part of her own members, their glory is her glory, their portion

* 1 Cor. iii. 23.
 † Matt. xix. 28.
 ‡ 1 Cor. xii. 28.

† Eph. i. 19-23.
 § Luke xxii. 28, 29.
 ¶ 1 Cor. iii. 8.

is her portion. Thus her "own vineyard" is before her, Christ is her's as well as she is His. Though every individual member has his own portion, collectively all is one, in, and before her. Not only are the internal fruits of the vineyard her's in Christ, and Christ's in her, but also those which she gathers in from abroad, from distant countries, by her sons, the ambassadors of the cross, all is her's in Christ, and she is Christ's, and Christ is God's, "I in them, and thou in me, that they be made perfect in one. . . . That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them."*

MESSIAH.

13. O thou that dwellest in the gardens,
 Companions (or companies), listen to thy voice ;
 Cause me to hear it.

When the Old Covenant Bride was preparing to cross the river Jordan for the conquest of Canaan, the divine Bridegroom said to her, "O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the precipices, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice ; for thy voice is sweet, and thy countenance comely."† There it was explained as referring to the times of danger and peril in which he knew that she would often find herself during that great struggle. He therefore recommended to her ardent prayer and the invocation of His holy name on all such occasions, when on hearing her voice He would come to her deliverance. (See the exposition of that verse at large.) But now the New Covenant Bride had a more difficult task before her, a far more dangerous warfare, and a longer and severer struggle to enter into. She was now to go forth for the conquest of a whole world lying in wickedness ; she was now to fight against principalities, and powers, and dominions ; against the prince of darkness with all his armies and instruments ; against a world of idols and their multitudes of priests, and supporters, and victims ; against thick clouds of gloomy superstition, deeply-rooted prejudices, and inflamed fanaticism, strengthened during many centuries. Yea, her present mission was

* John xvii. 23-26.

† John ii. 14.

to go forth and plant Edens in the dreary wilderness, and gardens of spices in desert and barren places, on wild mountain clefts and in the very dens of lions and tigers, and water them with the living waters of the gospel of Christ, as well as with her own tears, accompanying them with her prayers and supplications to her Lord, to grant the increase to the precious seed sown by her, and to bless her labours and efforts in the midst of persecution and calamities of every kind.

In our exposition of the last verses of the preceding chapter, it was seen how many multitudes of Gentiles had been awakened out of their idolatrous slumber, at the commencement of the Messianic period, how they waited in prayer and fasting for their deliverance by the promised Messiah, the Saviour of the world, and for the time when these happy tidings would be announced to them by the Bride. These waiting Gentiles are the *companions*, or *companies*, whom, in this verse, the Bridegroom points out to His missionary Church as those that listen to her voice. The word מְשִׁיבִים (Makshivim) signifies as well, "wait to listen," or "desire to listen," *i.e.*, that the companies in question waited with an eager desire to listen to the voice of the Bride, or Church, when she would come to plant the gardens of spices (Churches) among them. But when these gardens were planted, when these original waiting companies were visited by the messengers of the Church, and evangelised, and converted, and formed into Churches or separate communities, then other *listening companies* were formed of those that were yet without, but who eagerly watched and closely observed her "that dwelleth in the gardens," to see her walk, to hear her conversation, and thus to be able to judge about her character, and of the necessity and desirableness of joining themselves unto her. But no matter what the first motive of such *listening companies* were (and still are), whether it was an ardent desire to be convinced of her holy origin and of the truth she proclaimed, and join her, or whether it was a mere curiosity, or even out of a malicious desire to find occasion for calumniating her, it was (and is) her duty to be the same, to proclaim the same truth, to lead the same holy life and pure conversation, and to show by her entire behaviour both to friend and enemy "that she hath been with Jesus." And never

can the Church of God appear to more advantage, never can she shine more brilliantly, never is her lustre more effulgent, her influence more irresistible, and her character more divulged, than when she speaks to her Lord and Saviour, sings His praises, “adores Him who is a Spirit in spirit and in truth,” addresses to Him her ardent prayers, and humbly supplicates His aid and blessing in all her ways and actions, efforts and labours, whether for her own spiritual prosperity, or for the conversion of the companies that listen to her voice. Hence the Lord said unto her in this verse, that when the companies were listening to her voice, the best thing for her to do was to lift up her voice to her Beloved, her Head and Lord, as the best, yea, as the only means to impress, convince, and convert those listening companies, and show them the glory and divine majesty of her Lord, her love to Him and His to her; the implicit and entire confidence she has in His faithfulness to His promises, and the greatness of the privilege of belonging unto Him.

A few Scripture passages will still further illustrate this beautiful verse, and show the practical meaning of the recommendation it contains. “Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.”* Again, “And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people; all that see them shall acknowledge them that they are the seed which the LORD hath blessed.”† Again, “For Zion’s sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name which the mouth of the Lord shall pronounce.”‡ From these as well as from many similar passages which could be cited from the prophets, we see that the Church of God only shines in all her lustre when the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the express image of His brightness and majesty, shines upon her,—that then only the Gentiles see her righteousness (Jehovah Zidkenu), and the kings of the earth her glory, and come to her light, and walk at the

* Is. lx. 1—3.

† Is. lxi. 9.

‡ Is. lxii. 1, 2.

brightness of her rising. Her joy in the Lord, her unshaken faith in His promises; her constant love to Him who loved her unto death; her holy communion with her blessed Lord; her angelic praises for His honour and glory; her ardent prayers for the advancement of His kingdom in the midst of her as well as in the conversion of the world,—all these heighten her beauty, double her splendour, increase her strength, and irresistibly draw the listening companies to her and her Lord to join themselves unto them in an everlasting covenant.

The teachings, orders, and counsels of the Lord to His Bride the Church, speak to the same purpose: "Ye are the light of the world. . . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."* "I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."† "Whatever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He shall give it you. . . . Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."‡ Here again we have the entire sense and substance of our verse, "O thou that dwellest in the gardens," *i.e.*, in the midst of the world, in order to plant and cultivate gardens, and in the open air, as it were, exposed to the view of every body. "Companions," or "companies, listen to thy voice," *i.e.*, "ye are the light of the world," intended to enlighten and teach and guide those who sit in darkness, by doctrine and example. "Cause me to hear it," *i.e.*, address thyself unto me. "Ask and you shall receive" on your behalf, for your own spiritual growth and prosperity, as well as on behalf of the listening companies, for their conversion and salvation.

The early history of the Christian Church shows us how she conformed faithfully to that precept of her Divine Master. It was in the midst of praise and prayer to Him who delights at all times to hear her voice, that the promised Comforter the Holy Spirit was poured out upon her, and the first fruits of that glorious manifestation was the conversion of three thousand listening companions. It was "at

* Matt. v. 14—16. † Matt. xviii. 19, 20. ‡ John xvi. 23, 24.

the hour of prayer" that Peter and John went into the temple to cause Jesus to hear this voice; He heard it, and five thousand *companions* were added to the Church. It was at the hearing of her voice that the Lord sent His angel to loose Peter's chains, to open the doors of the prison, and to lead him to his brethren who still prayed. Paul and Silas caused him to hear their voice out of the dungeon at Philippi, when a *listening companion* with his family was converted and saved.

In planting and cultivating the gardens of spices among the Gentiles, the Apostolic Church acted in the same manner and prospered. "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified."* "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God. According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."† And how did the Church manifest that wisdom of God in Jesus and him crucified? "Not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." And it is the Spirit who revealeth to the Church the mysteries of heaven in Christ, as it is the same Spirit who makes intercession for her by the very words He puts into her mouth, and which she causes her Beloved to hear. "Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. . . . That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy," &c.‡ "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation."§ "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable services. . . . Be kindly affectionated one to another with brotherly love. . . . Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer."||

* 1 Cor. ii. 1, 2. † Ephes. iii. 10, 11. ‡ Rom. xv. 2, 6, 9.

§ 1 Peter ii. 12. || Rom. xii. 1, 10, 12.

The primitive Church always acted according to this counsel of her Beloved. While many companies of the Gentile nations listened to her, what did they hear? The praises of Jesus and Him crucified; Jesus, the promised Saviour of the world; Jesus, the holy Lamb of God, without spot or blemish, who offered Himself on Calvary as a sin-offering for a guilty world; Jesus risen from the dead ascended into heaven, where He sits on the right hand of His Father on His everlasting throne; Jesus, unto whom all power was given in heaven and on earth; Jesus, the high-priest and mediator of His people, and who will come on the last day to judge the living and the dead. While this was her public and repeated confession, which the listening companies heard—while this was her simple but mighty Gospel preaching, she at the same time lifted up her voice, heart and soul, her eyes and hands unto her Beloved in heaven, and unceasingly made Him hear her supplicating voice, imploring His blessing and aid, protection and guidance, for the promotion of His glory in her own growth in grace and prosperity, as well as for the conversion of sinners in general, for the coming of His kingdom, for the approach of the promised time when all the kingdoms of this world would become the kingdoms of God and His Christ, when every knee shall bow before Him, every tongue confess him, and when this earth shall be filled with the wisdom and knowledge of God. This was the rule observed by the Apostolic Church, and this was and is the rule and touchstone of the Church of God in all ages and generations. A deviation from this rule is a sure indication that the vessel has taken a wrong and dangerous direction. Alas, many Churches and congregations have paid no attention to it, and have been driven by gales of human passion, and by the gloomy storms of error, among the rocks of darkness, where their vessel was broken to pieces, and their light has been extinguished, and the last sign of spiritual life has gone down beneath the waves of indifference and sin. They may still call themselves by their former name, but a name profits nothing. Examine them by the light of Jehovah's candle, and you will see that only a few living beings are floating round the wreck, and that even those must soon disappear. "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound, they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance."

THE CHURCH.

14. Flee thee away, O my Beloved,
 But be thou like a roe,
 Or like a young hart
 Upon the mountains of spices.

Again we must refer the reader to the second chapter of this Song. There, the Bridegroom who accompanied His Bride in the pillar of cloud and fire on her march through the wilderness, bade her farewell on her crossing the Jordan to enter Canaan. There (as here) He promised to be with her, though invisibly, in all her ways, and in all times of danger and tribulation, on condition that she should make Him hear her voice from the clefts of the rock, and from the secret places whither oppression and fear of the enemy had led her, and He would come for her deliverance. There (as here) the resigned Bride said: "Until the day break and the shades flee away," *i.e.*, until my hard struggles, and dangers, and bloody wars are at an end—until a temple shall be built and consecrated for thy re-appearance, "turn round about (me), O my beloved, and be Thou like a roe, or a young hart on the mountains of Bether;" *i.e.*, accompany Thou me, though invisibly, in all my journeys—appear now and then to aid me when I need Thy help against the mighty—fight Thou my battles on the mountains of Ephraim and Judah, until my promised rest be secured, and Thou come again to dwell in the midst of thy Church in the holy place between the Cherubim of glory. (See chap. ii. 14, 17, and explanation.)

The case now was quite analogous, the condition of the Church quite similar, though accompanied with somewhat different circumstances of an advanced spiritual nature. The Bridegroom had now come, not in a pillar of cloud and fire, but in a body of flesh and blood prepared for Him in order to finish the plan of salvation for His Bride, the Church. He led her for several years through the dreary wilderness of tribulation and trials, persecutions, and dangers. A short while before His humiliation and death on the cross, He could say: "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me. . . ."

While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. And now come I to thee, and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them thy word, and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil," &c.* Such was the solemn and exalted prayer which the gracious Saviour offered up to His heavenly Father, before His separation from His Bride, whom He was now to send forth into the wide world, to bring its inhabitants under His dominion, not by fighting against them with the sword, as His Bride had once to do against the Canaanites, but by carrying to them the good tidings of peace and joy, and everlasting deliverance. But while she was to carry the Gospel, and the torch of celestial light in one hand, her Master and Saviour knew also that she would have to fight hard with the two-edged sword of the Spirit of God, the word of truth, against the powers of darkness, and the prince of this world, and with what awful difficulties, dangers, and tribulations, her mission was surrounded. And therefore he so ardently prayed the Father to grant her His aid, to preserve and strengthen her, to sanctify, encourage, and prosper her.

We see now how Israel's crossing the Jordan, entering into Canaan to conquer it, and the Covenant Angel's taking leave of them at that very difficult juncture, was typical (and wonderfully so) of the Church of Christ crossing the mountains of Judea, going into "all the world," to conquer its inhabitants for the kingdom of Christ and of God, and of the Covenant Angel leaving them at such a juncture, and ascending into heaven. While on the former and typical occasion Israel numbered six hundred thousand fighting men, under an experienced and dreaded general, the Church which was now to go forth for the conquest of a world lying in darkness and wickedness, consisted of an handful of poor, despised, and persecuted fishermen, hated and persecuted by their own countrymen, helpless, and without influence, and feeble in spirit. The mere idea

* John xvii. 11—15.

therefore of His leaving them in this world alone at such a juncture would have greatly afflicted and discouraged them, had He not prepared them for it beforehand; "I go to prepare a place for you. . . . And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever. Even the Spirit of truth. . . . I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you. . . . These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things. . . . If ye loved me ye would rejoice because I said I go unto the Father."* Again, "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send him unto you. . . . And ye now, therefore, have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you. . . . Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. . . . Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."†

The above passages exhibit the substance of the two last verses of our Song in a wonderfully clear light. Before leaving this world for heaven, the Saviour prepared His disciples for the approaching separation by showing them the great advantage that would accrue to them by His returning to His Father. He recommended prayer to His Church, and advised her to "cause Him constantly to hear her voice," and promised not only to send the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, to lead and guide her in all her ways, but also to come Himself from time to time to visit her and to watch for her welfare and prosperity. At first her heart was filled with sorrow at the indication of His departure, but she was reassured and strengthened after His resurrection. Having been strengthened in her faith by the Father's having raised Him as "the first-born from the dead," as He Himself had intimated to her—and having been encouraged by the sweet consolation she derived during the various meetings she had with her risen Lord—and greatly enlightened by the eyes of her understanding being opened to understand the Scriptures and all that was foretold by the prophets regarding

* John xvi.

John xvi.

Him and her, she began to see clearly how important for her would be His departure to heaven, and how great would be the advantages she would derive from having such a mediator and intercessor on Jehovah's throne. Therefore she is presented in the last verse of the Song as having gathered courage and strength, and saying, "Flee thee away, O my Beloved," *i.e.*, Flee away, O my blessed and gloriously risen Saviour! flee away from this miserable wilderness of tumult and persecution! flee away into thy Father's bosom to take power and glory, majesty and honour—"Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O thou mighty one, even thy glory and thy majesty. And in this thy majesty mount quickly thy chariot in the cause of truth and prostrated (or humiliated, or downcast) righteousness; and let thy right hand lead thee to glorious deeds."* "But be thou like a roe, or like a young hart upon the mountains of spices," *i.e.*, while I am resigned to see thee depart to heaven, according to thy promise, leave me not comfortless, but come and visit me and be with me, though invisibly, to the end of the world. Be thou always swift like a roe to come to my aid, when, according to thy command, I am engaged in planting gardens of spices on the wild and craggy mountains of this world. Be thou near me when I am engaged in hot war against thy deadly enemies, the prince of darkness and the powers of this world, who will contest with me for every inch of ground. O thou my beloved Saviour, come to my aid that I faint not. Thou who commandedst into calm the tempestuous elements, come to my help against the mighty. Come to bless the works of my hands for thine own glory. Come to give the increase to the precious seed, to the grains of spices which I may be enabled to sow on the barren mountains of this dark world. This is all I ask. With thy aid and thy presence I am sure to conquer and to go on from strength to strength until I meet thee in Zion above.

* See the author's New Translation and Exposition of the Psalms, Ps. xlv.

